



## Measles – Information for staff working in Immigration Removal Centres (IRCs) in England

Measles is currently affecting more people in England than usual. It is very infectious and anyone who is unprotected can catch it. You can get a measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine to **PROTECT** you from catching measles.

### What is measles?

- measles is a viral infection most commonly found in young children who have not been immunised. However, adults can also catch measles if they have not had it before or have not had the vaccine
- it begins with a high temperature, a runny or blocked nose, sneezing, a cough, and red, sore, watery eyes
- after a few days a red-brown spotty rash will appear. This starts on the face and behind the ears, before spreading to the rest of the body
- the measles rash may be harder to see on brown or black skin, but the skin may feel rough or bumpy



### How serious is measles?

- measles is an unpleasant illness and easily passed from one person to another
- in some people it can cause complications, such as ear infection, lung infection (pneumonia), diarrhoea, dehydration, or fits (which are less common)
- in very rare cases some people who get measles can develop serious complications, which can be fatal

### How do you catch measles?

- the measles virus lives in the nose and throat of infected people
- you can catch measles through close contact with someone who has measles. This could be from the air when they cough or sneeze, or by touching things that someone with measles has coughed or sneezed on
- a person with measles can spread the infection in the 4 days before they get the rash. Once a person has the rash, they can still spread the infection for another 4 days

### Can you prevent measles?

Yes. Measles can be prevented by 2 doses of the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine. In the UK, the first dose is usually given to children aged 12 months old, and the second dose is given after they are 3 years and 4 months old.

However it's never too late to have the MMR vaccine, if you haven't had it or are unsure then you can be vaccinated as an adult to protect you against measles.

## Why am I being asked to consider having the measles vaccine?

Recently, there has been an increase in the number of measles cases in England.

There is a significant risk of measles outbreaks in IRCs because:

- a) measles is highly infectious
- b) there may be many detainees and staff who are vulnerable to infection
- c) even a single infectious person could result in many more cases

To protect the health and well-being of both staff and detainees of IRCs and to avoid disruptions to the operational management of the IRC, we are recommending that staff are checked to see if they are potentially vulnerable to infection. Any staff member who has not been vaccinated, or is unsure, will be offered the MMR vaccine.

## Can you tell if you're protected against measles?

- people who have had measles in the past are unlikely to get it again
- people born before 1970 in the UK are likely to have been exposed to measles as a child and have natural immunity
- people born after 1970 in the UK are less likely to have natural immunity and are at risk of getting measles unless they have had 2 doses of the MMR vaccine
- people who have had 2 doses of MMR are very unlikely to get measles
- if there is any doubt, it is better to have an extra dose than to risk not being fully protected

## What if I am pregnant?

- if you have had 2 doses of MMR you and your pregnancy are protected against measles, mumps and rubella
- measles and rubella can be very serious in pregnancy. Please avoid anyone who has measles. If you have another child with measles, please urgently inform healthcare team
- you can't be given the MMR vaccine if you are pregnant; if you think you have been in contact with someone with measles, let your healthcare team know as soon as possible

## What if you have a weak immune system?

- if you have a weak immune system you should seek medical advice from your GP if you suspect you have come into contact with someone with measles

## Do I need to get the vaccine?

Yes if either:

- you were born after 1970 and do not have documented evidence of 2 previous doses of a measles-containing vaccination or have not previously had measles
- or if you were born before 1970 and have not previously been vaccinated – even though the risk of developing measles is smaller in this age group, vaccination is still available on request

## Where do I get the vaccine?

Your local GP practice should be able to provide you with the vaccine.

### Where can I get more information about measles and the MMR vaccine?

More information about measles is available from NHS.UK website at:  
[www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles)