Public Health England

Public reminded to check they are up-to-date with MMR vaccine following measles cases in Kent & Medway

Public Health England (PHE) South East is urging people in Kent and Medway to check they are up-to-date with two doses of MMR vaccine. The call comes following 5 confirmed cases of measles since mid-March 2018 in the Medway and Swale areas.

PHE is working closely with NHS and local authority partners to raise awareness of how the public can play their part in protecting themselves and their families, and prevent further cases.

Measles is a highly infectious viral illness that can be very unpleasant and lead to serious complications, especially in people with immune problems, pregnant women, and in babies younger than one year.

Symptoms of measles typically include:

- high fever (temperature of 39°C or higher)
- sore, red, watery eyes
- coughing
- aching and feeling generally unwell
- a blotchy red brown rash, which usually appears 2-4 days after the initial symptoms

Angeline Walker, PHE South East Health Protection consultant, said:

“Measles is extremely infectious and not just a childhood illness but one that can affect anyone at any age. It is really important that anyone, even adults, who hasn’t already had two doses of the MMR vaccine contacts their GP surgery for an appointment to get vaccinated. If you’re unsure whether you or your children have had 2 MMRs, first check your child’s Red Book or contact your GP surgery. You do not need additional MMR vaccines if you and your children have all had two MMR vaccines.

“With ongoing outbreaks in other parts of Europe including Romania, Italy and Ukraine, we’re also warning that anyone travelling to these countries is at particularly high risk. If you’re planning to go to these countries, contact your GP to arrange to make sure that you are fully vaccinated before you travel.”

Because measles is so infectious, anyone with symptoms is also being advised NOT to go to their GP or a hospital without telephoning first. This allows arrangements to be made to reduce the chance of spreading the infection hospital or GP waiting rooms.
Miss Walker added: “Everyone should be vigilant for the symptoms of measles, including high fever; sore, red, watery eyes, coughing, aching and feeling generally unwell and a blotchy red brown rash, which usually appears after the initial symptoms. If you’re concerned that you or your child may have measles, please do not go straight to A&E or your GP surgery. Instead telephone your GP or ring NHS 111 for advice. This may help to prevent measles being spread to other people who may be vulnerable.

“If you think you could have measles, it’s also really important to stay away from places where you could come into contact with lots of other people – so do not go to work or school, visit hospital or attend social gatherings until at least four full days after the onset of the rash.”

The free MMR vaccine is a safe and effective way of protecting against measles, mumps and rubella. It is particularly important for parents to take up the offer of MMR vaccination for their children at 1 year of age and as a pre-school booster at 3-years 4 months of age. If children and young adults have missed these vaccinations in the past, they are recommended to ask their GP practice for the vaccine now, in light of the increase in recent cases.

Notes to editors

1. Anyone planning to travel to Europe should check NaTHNaC travel health advice: https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/

2. For more information about measles, see NHS Choices: https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles/

3. Public Health England exists to protect and improve the nation’s health and wellbeing, and reduce health inequalities. We do this through world-leading science, knowledge and intelligence, advocacy, partnerships and the delivery of specialist public health services. We are an executive agency of the Department of Health, and a distinct delivery organisation with operational autonomy to advise and support government, local authorities and the NHS in a professionally independent manner.

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