

MMR vaccination urged as measles outbreak declared in South East Wales

Wednesday, 7 March 2018

Public Health Wales is urging young adults and teenagers to make sure they are protected against measles with two doses of the MMR vaccine as it investigates an outbreak of measles in South East Wales.

Parents are also urged to make sure their children are fully protected.

Six people have been confirmed as having measles in Cardiff, Newport and Blaenau Gwent. Two further probable cases are also under investigation.

Although cases are distributed across South East Wales, the first few cases are thought to have been exposed to an unknown highly infectious case in early February. This is because investigations have revealed that all were in the same location in Cardiff city centre on the same day. We are now seeing onward transmission in other parts of South East Wales from some of these early cases.

Public Health Wales is working in partnership with Health Boards and Local Authorities in South East Wales to contact those exposed to measles cases and arranging vaccination as appropriate.

Children with early measles symptoms – which can include a fever, cough, runny nose and red eyes (conjunctivitis) - should be kept home from school. The distinctive red rash develops two to seven days after these first symptoms.

Parents should also contact their GP or NHS Direct Wales on 0845 46 47, and alert them of the symptoms before attending any appointment.

Dr Gwen Lowe, Consultant in Communicable Disease Control for Public Health Wales, said: "Measles is highly infectious and the only way to prevent large outbreaks is through vaccination. As this outbreak has shown, even being in the same proximity as a stranger in the first stages of measles can result in infection.

"We urge parents whose children have not received two doses of MMR to ensure that they speak to their GP immediately to arrange this quick, safe and effective vaccine.

"Adults who have never had measles or the MMR vaccine, and who work in close contact with children, are also urged to ensure they speak to their GP about vaccination."

The first dose of MMR is usually given to babies at 12 months of age and the second at three years and four months of age, but it is never too late to catch up on missed doses.

The MMR vaccine is recommended by the World Health Organization, UK Department of Health and Public Health Wales as the most effective and safe way to protect children against measles.

About 1 in 5 children with measles can experience serious complications such as ear infections, pneumonia or meningitis. One in 10 children with measles ends up in hospital and in rare cases it can be fatal.

Further information on measles, including a link to a [video testimony](#) from a mother whose three year old unvaccinated daughter contracted measles, is available at <http://www.publichealthwales.org/measles>.