

As cases of measles increase across the UK, Swansea Bay University Health Board is encouraging children, teenagers and adults who have not had two doses of the Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine to arrange vaccination with their GP as soon as possible.

The MMR vaccine is safe and effective, and protects against measles, mumps and rubella (German measles). These diseases are highly infectious and can very easily spread between people who are not vaccinated.

The NHS offers the first MMR dose at 12 months old, and the second dose at 3 years and 4 months, ensuring children are fully protected before starting school. Those who have not been vaccinated or who have had only one dose of MMR, are considered unprotected.

Measles can make children and adults very unwell, and some people who are infected will suffer life-changing complications. People in certain at-risk groups, including babies and young children, pregnant women, and people with weakened immunity, are at increased risk of complications from measles.

If you or your child are not vaccinated and you come into contact with someone with measles, you may be advised to stay home (quarantine) and away from work or school for 21 days to ensure you or your child do not pass measles to others if you become infected. Teachers, health and care workers, and other staff may also be asked to stay at home if they are unvaccinated and come into contact with someone with measles.

Dr Keith Reid, Executive Director of Public Health at Swansea Bay UHB, said "Measles cases are on the rise in England.

"While vaccination rates in Swansea Bay are not as low as in Birmingham there are still significant numbers of vulnerable people in our communities.

"Measles is highly infectious, much more so than COVID, and causes serious infection. Please take up any offer of immunisation promptly.

"If you have missed a scheduled vaccination, you can still get it from your GP. If you are overdue for a vaccination then please make an appointment as soon as possible.

"It takes two weeks to develop immunity after vaccination so now is a good time.

“Not being immunised can have other impacts as well as increasing the risk of infection – for example, non-immunised contacts of a measles case have to be quarantined for 21 days.”

Swansea Bay University Health Board will work together with education colleagues to ensure that by 31st July 2024, every school in Wales with 50 pupils has been revisited for MMR Catch up clinics with the aim of achieving 90% of its pupils recorded as having received two doses of MMR for pupils of reception age and above.

Ultimately, succeeding in that goal of elimination will require us to achieve the overarching target of 95% uptake of two MMR doses nationally and by each health board. Children who have not completed the full course of MMR (2 doses) will be contacted and encouraged to take up the offer of the vaccine in a variety of settings.

If staff are unvaccinated, under vaccinated or are unsure of their immunity status in a school where vaccination catch-up activity is being undertaken, the MMR vaccine can also be offered to adults.

If you are not sure if your child or you have had two doses of MMR you can contact the Swansea Bay UHB Immunisation Team to check the MMR vaccine status on 01792 200492.

The MMR vaccine is available through your GP, free on the NHS. Contact your GP to arrange vaccination, or drop ins are available at our Local Vaccination Centre's.

From Monday 4th March 2024, MMR vaccination drop ins will also be available at our local vaccination centres:

Canolfan Gorseinon Centre, *Millers Drive, opposite Aldi, Swansea, SA4 4Q.*

Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 9:30am – 5:30pm.

Aberafan Shopping Centre, *Port Talbot, SA13 1PB - Situated next door to B&M in the Aberafan Shopping Centre, near the river bridge entrance.*

Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, 9:30am – 5:30pm.

You can find out more about the MMR vaccine by following this link to the Public Health Wales website - <https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/immunisation-and-vaccines/mmr/>