

Public Health England (PHE) South East is urging people in Canterbury and areas where there is much contact with Canterbury through school, college, work, hospital visits or social to check their children are up-to-date with two doses of MMR vaccine following five confirmed cases of measles in the area.

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

Dr Rachel Pudney, PHE South East Health Protection consultant, said:

“Measles is not a harmless childhood illness as many think – it is extremely infectious, can strike anyone and sadly in some instances can have very serious long term and life changing consequences.

“The best form of protection against measles is the MMR vaccination which is why PHE is urging people to check their MMR status with their GP surgery. It is really important that anyone 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 two 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.

“Thanks to vaccinations like the MMR, measles is not as common in the UK as it once was, but in recent years we have seen more cases emerging, especially among groups and communities where MMR vaccination rates are not as high.”

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

Symptoms 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

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

Dr Pudney added: “Everyone should be vigilant for the symptoms of measles and 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 spreading it to other people who may be vulnerable.”

Geoffrey Lymer
Kent County Councillor
Dover West Ward