

# **Open letter to Parents and Carers in Merseyside from Alder Hey Children's Hospital, UKHSA and Directors of Public Health for Liverpool, Sefton and Knowsley**

**A recent increase in measles cases in Merseyside is putting children and young people at risk within our communities and our hospital.**

**Several children are seriously unwell and receiving treatment at Alder Hey Children's Hospital.**

**Measles is on the rise amongst our children. We can all help stop it. Get vaccinated now.**

## **What is the current situation with measles in Merseyside?**

We are seeing an increase in measles cases in Merseyside with more of our local children and young people becoming ill.

The reason we are seeing more cases of measles in our children and young people is because fewer people are having the MMR vaccine, which protects against measles as well as two other viruses called mumps and rubella.

The number of children being treated at Alder Hey for effects and complications of measles is increasing. Children in hospital who are very poorly for another reason, are at higher risk of catching the virus.

## **What is measles?**

Measles is caused by a highly contagious virus which can infect anyone who isn't immune. Symptoms can be severe and are leading to increasing numbers of children being admitted to our hospital. In rare cases, catching the disease can be fatal. There is no specific treatment for measles.

Anyone can catch measles at any age. Measles is particularly dangerous for some of our most vulnerable children and young people, including those under one year of age and those already battling other serious illnesses like cancer.

Measles usually starts with a runny nose, sneezing, coughing and a high temperature. It may also cause red, sore eyes. The measles rash follows a few days later, starting on the face and behind the ears before spreading to the rest of the body.

## **How can I prevent my child from catching measles?**

The MMR vaccination is the safest and best defence against measles.

This vaccine has been available for many years and is proven to be safe. Two doses of the MMR vaccine will give lifelong protection against measles, mumps and rubella. The vaccination is free and easily available from your GP at any age. For children, the first dose of the vaccine is typically given at 12 months of age, and the second at around 3 years and 4 months.

Studies have shown that there is no link between receiving vaccine and developing autism spectrum disorders.

**Please protect yourself as well as our children and young people by ensuring you are vaccinated.**

Anyone who suspects they or their child has measles should call their GP surgery or NHS 111 first before turning up at a healthcare setting such as a GP practice, urgent treatment centre or accident and emergency department, to help stop the spread of the virus.

You can find further information on MMR and other childhood vaccinations here: <https://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations/nhs-vaccinations-and-when-to-have-them/> For further information about measles visit <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles/>

**Alfie Bass, Medical Director Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust**

**Nathan Askew, Chief Nurse, Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust**

**Professor Matthew Ashton, Director of Public Health for Liverpool Council**

**Margaret Jones, Director of Public Health for Sefton Council**

**Dr. Sarah McNulty, Director of Public Health for Knowsley Council**

**Dr Merav Kliner, Regional Deputy Director from UKHSA North West**