

To: Head Teacher,
Lothian secondary schools

Date 29/05/2018
Our Ref HPT/GG/LW
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Email Health.protection@nhslothian.scot.nhs.uk

Dear Head Teacher,

Measles alert:

I am writing to alert you about measles outbreaks which are sweeping across Europe and other parts of the world. The highest number of cases to date in 2018 are in Romania (2712), France (2173) Greece (1 948) and Italy (805) respectively.

Twenty two deaths have also been reported by these countries in 2018. Of particular concern is the situation in France and Italy where the numbers of cases are doubling monthly. In the previous year, 14 813 cases of measles were reported across Europe. Since this resurgence in 2016, there have been 49 deaths due to measles.

In England, but not so far in Scotland, a number of outbreaks have been reported originating from continental Europe with a total of more than 400 cases. Most are teenagers and young adults.

Measles is the most infectious of our infectious diseases. In an unimmunised population, one person with measles will spread it, on average, to another 15. Only 15 minutes in the same room or a face to face conversation is enough to infect someone else. Furthermore, a person with measles is infectious for a total of 10 days. This includes 5 days before the rash appears and the person realises they are ill, and is when it can so easily spread.

The introduction of measles into a school after the summer holidays could severely incapacitate a school. Not just due to individual students being off but due to quarantining of close contacts for up to 21 days.

Two doses of MMR are 95% effective in preventing measles. NHS Lothian is writing to parents (at their home address) of all secondary school pupils who, according to our data, have not had MMR. We are inviting those pupils to community clinics during the early summer. It also gives parents the opportunity to update their data. We would obviously be grateful for your support of this initiative. MMR can also be obtained from GPs. I would advise parents to make appointments in good time before travelling to Europe on holiday.

With many thanks

Yours sincerely



Dr Lorna Willocks

Consultant in Public Health Medicine/Immunisation Co-ordinator

<https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/news-events/measles-vaccination-gaps-teenagers-and-young-adults-highlighted-ecdc-report>

<https://ecdc.europa.eu/en/publications-data/monthly-measles-and-rubella-monitoring-report-may-2018>