



PRESS RELEASE

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MEASLES OUTBREAK IN GIBRALTAR

During the last week, the Director of Public Health has been notified of 17 cases of Measles in Gibraltar. Most of the cases seen so far have been in children under 18 years and predominantly in children who have not been vaccinated with the MMR vaccine. Children who have not had the disease naturally and who are unvaccinated are now at greater risk.

Measles is a very unpleasant disease although nowadays quite rare. Most people will have a mild attack with fever and rash, but it should be remembered that the disease is capable of causing very serious consequences. Complications like fits or bacterial infection and pneumonia can develop. Adults as well as children can get the disease, but it tends to affect small children more often. However, many adults would have got the disease as a child and will therefore be immune.

Measles is preventable with the MMR vaccine, which is available free on Gibraltar's health service. The vaccine was introduced in 1989, but unfortunately encountered adverse publicity in the UK in the late 1990s, causing some parents not to immunise their child. These fears have subsequently been disproved by several large international studies, results of which are widely published on NHS websites and elsewhere. The World Health Organisation (WHO) calls the MMR vaccine "a highly effective vaccine with an outstanding safety record". Fortunately in Gibraltar the uptake of vaccine has generally been good.

The Gibraltar Health Authority is urging all parents of children who have not had the MMR vaccine to immunise their children as soon as possible. This course will consist of two injections, approximately three months apart.

Arrangements are also being made to offer vaccine to younger children at earlier ages than usual where it is felt that the child may be exposed to greater risk of catching the disease. Children can be immunised as early as 6 months.

For further information, please contact the Child Welfare department at the Primary Care Centre (tel : 72945) or your doctor.

Public information is also available on the UK website : <http://www.immunisation.nhs.uk>.

