



Department of  
Public Health Mid-West,  
Health Service Executive,  
Mount Kennett House,  
Henry Street, Limerick  
V94 KN3N  
Tel: +353 (0)61 483338  
Fax: +353 (0)61 464205

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For the attention Third Level Institutions, Students and Staff

## Measles Outbreak in the Mid-West

### Measles Information

There are now 26 cases of Measles confirmed in the Mid-West region since the beginning of the year, most of these are in Limerick City. Almost two thirds of cases are aged between 15 and 40 years.

Measles is a serious public health issue. It is so contagious that if one person has it, 90% of the people close to that person who are not immune will also become infected. It is spread easily through coughing and sneezing. Measles can lead to serious complications such as pneumonia and inflammation of the brain and can, in rare cases, lead to a fatal disease of the brain which develops years after the infection. The mortality rate from measles infection is 1-2 per 1,000 cases.

There is a 400% increase in the number of measles cases in Europe in 2017 compared with 2016, with ongoing outbreaks in the UK, France, Italy, Germany, Belgium, Greece, Portugal and Romania and across the world. Measles can be transmitted easily within the confined space of an airplane to people who are non-immune.

### The MMR vaccine

The only effective protection against measles is two doses of the MMR vaccine. Anyone who has not had two doses of MMR is at risk of getting measles if they come in contact with someone who has it.

As part of the outbreak control measures MMR is available free through GPs. The HSE is paying for the vaccine and for the GPs to give the vaccine. Anyone who doesn't have a medical card will need to give their PPSN.

Measles vaccine was introduced in Ireland in 1985 and MMR in 1988. In Ireland:

- Most of those aged over 40 are immune to measles due to natural infection.
- Most aged 35 - 40 years have had neither measles infection nor MMR vaccination.
- Those aged 30 - 34 may have received 1 dose of MMR.
- Those aged under age 30 years would have had the opportunity to get two doses of MMR but uptake was less than 70% for some age groups.



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- People who did not grow up in Ireland they may have had different immunisation schedules and may or may not have been offered measles containing vaccines.

People who cannot get the MMR vaccine i.e. young infants, pregnant women and those whose immune systems are weakened (cancer patients etc.) are relying on the people around them who can get the MMR vaccine to help protect them.

#### [HSE Advice for students and staff aged under 40](#)

##### [Protect yourself with MMR](#)

- Check if you have had measles infection or two doses of MMR.
- If not, visit your GP to get immunised as soon as possible.
- If you do not have a medical record of measles or MMR vaccination it is not harmful to have extra doses to be on the safe side.
- Those sitting exams may wish to prioritise this due to the potential disruption to their exams that measles infection could cause.
- MMR is especially important in those who are planning to travel abroad either for holidays, conferences, courses, Erasmus programmes, etc..

##### [If you think you have measles \(ill with rash, fever, cough, temperature\)](#)

- Stay at home from work/college. Children should not attend school or crèche.
- Call the Department of Public Health at 061 – 483338 to advise that you think you/your child may have measles.
- Telephone your GP so that they can see you at a time/place when no one else is there (to avoid infecting others).
- Your GP may organise a test to confirm the diagnosis – this is usually done by using a small swab that takes a sample of the oral fluid from the mouth.
- Patients with symptoms of measles should avoid presenting to the emergency department where possible. If it is necessary to seek urgent care, it is important to inform the ambulance service or emergency department that you have symptoms consistent with measles beforehand so that the appropriate precautions can be taken. Similarly, if you have been in contact with a confirmed case of measles and are seeking medical attention, please inform the healthcare provider before attending.



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Yours sincerely,

Mai Mannix

Dr Mai Mannix MPH, MRCGP, FFPHMI, Director of Public Health, HSE Mid-West,

MRN: 11309 e-mail: [mai.mannix@hse.ie](mailto:mai.mannix@hse.ie)

For more information on measles see: <http://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/vaccinepreventable/measles/>

For more information about the MMR see: [www.immunisation.ie/](http://www.immunisation.ie/)

For more information on the risk of measles transmission in the EU/EEA see:  
<https://ecdc.europa.eu/en/measles>