



## Measles: Queen's Student Frequently Asked Questions

The [Public Health Agency](#) (PHA) has launched a campaign aimed at protecting the public against the growing threat of measles. Measles is highly infectious and can easily spread between unvaccinated people. England has recently seen an increase in measles cases and there has been the first confirmed case in Northern Ireland. The World Health Organization has reported a 30-fold rise of measles cases in Europe.

The Public Health Agency is responsible for providing information and guidance on infectious diseases. These Frequently Asked Questions are based on the information provided by the PHA. If you have any specific questions about your health, you should contact your GP directly.

### **What is measles?**

Measles is a highly infectious viral illness that can be very unpleasant and sometimes lead to serious complications.

Anyone can get measles if they haven't been vaccinated or had it before, although it's most common in young children.

The infection usually clears in around 7 to 10 days.

### **What are the symptoms of measles?**

The initial symptoms of measles develop around 10 days (but may be as short as 7 days or as long as 21 days) after you're infected.

Symptoms can include:

- cold-like symptoms, such as a runny nose, sneezing, and a cough;
- sore, red eyes that may be sensitive to light;
- a high temperature (fever), which may reach around 40°C (104°F);
- small greyish-white spots on the inside of the cheeks.

A few days later, a [red-brown blotchy rash](#) will appear. This usually starts on the head or upper neck, before spreading outwards to the rest of the body

### **When should I contact my GP if I suspect I have measles?**

**WHEN:** You should contact your GP **as soon as possible** if you suspect that you may have measles.

**HOW:** [Measles](#) is very infectious and **anyone with suspected measles must avoid any situation where they can spread the disease**, such as a GP waiting room or an emergency department. People should **phone** in advance for advice rather than turning up to a healthcare setting, including out-of-hours surgeries (except in an emergency).

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### **Is measles serious?**

**Measles is an infection that spreads very easily and can cause serious problems in some people. Having the MMR vaccine is the best way to prevent it.**

Measles can be unpleasant but will usually pass in about 7 to 10 days without causing any further problems. Adults are likely to be ill for longer than younger children. However, it can also be very serious with potentially life-threatening complications in some people.

Once you've had measles, your body builds up resistance (immunity) to the virus and it's highly unlikely you'll get it again.

### **How does measles spread?**

The measles virus is contained in the millions of tiny droplets that come out of the nose and mouth when an infected person coughs or sneezes. You can easily catch measles by breathing in these droplets or, if the droplets have settled on a surface, by touching the surface and then placing your hands near your nose or mouth. The virus can survive on surfaces for a few hours.

People with measles are infectious from when the symptoms develop until about four days after the rash first appears.

### **How can measles be prevented?**

Measles can be prevented by having the [Measles, Mumps and Rubella \(MMR\) vaccine](#).

In the UK and Ireland this is given in **two doses** as part of the childhood vaccination programme. The first dose is given just after a child's first birthday and a second dose is given at 3 years and 4 months, before a child starts school.

Adults and older children can be vaccinated at any age if they haven't been fully vaccinated before.

If you are not sure if you have been vaccinated, ask your GP.

### **What should I do if I am not vaccinated?**

First and second doses of the Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine are being offered **free of charge** at special catch-up clinics until **Sunday 31 March**.

Anyone **aged up to and including 25 years who missed getting the vaccines first time around** is encouraged to attend for vaccination.

- If you're an adult up to the age of 25 and are unsure if you are fully vaccinated, you should contact your GP surgery to check.
- If you have never received any doses of MMR vaccine, you need to **book early to allow one month between dose one and dose two** before the end of March.

The PHA catch-up clinics are for those who were scheduled to have an MMR injection in the UK as a child. If this is not applicable to you and you are concerned about measles, please contact your GP directly.

Information on the MMR catch-up clinics, including how to book, is available on the [NI Direct website](#).

### **I am not from the UK or Ireland and have not had the MMR vaccination – what do I do?**

If you were born or brought up abroad, you may need two doses of MMR.

Different countries offer different immunisations and not all use the combined MMR vaccine.

If you don't have a record of the vaccines you have received or are unsure, you should discuss this with your GP. You may also need other immunisations to fully protect you from other infections.

### **Where can I get more information about the MMR vaccination?**

Information on the MMR vaccine is available on the Public Health Agency [website](#).

### **I am not registered with a GP – how do I get registered?**

It's really important that all students register with a GP (this stands for 'general practitioner' and is the term used in the UK to describe local or family doctors).

Information on how to do so is available on the [My Queen's website](#).

### **What happens if I am diagnosed with measles?**

It is really important that, if you suspect you have measles, you contact your GP to have this confirmed. If you are confirmed as having measles please follow the advice of your GP.

If you are diagnosed with measles, your doctor will notify the PHA. The PHA will then contact you to find out who you have been in contact with during any infection period. Please follow the advice of your doctor and the PHA.

There's no specific treatment for measles, but the condition usually improves within 7 to 10 days. Your GP will probably suggest taking things easy at home until you're feeling better. Stay away from University for at least four days from when the measles rash first appears to reduce the risk of spreading the infection.

You should also try to avoid contact with people who are more vulnerable to the infection, such as young children, pregnant individuals and people with weakened immune systems.

All staff and students should continue to follow the normal absence management protocols by letting their line manager or School Office know they are unwell.

### **Who should I tell if I have measles?**

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There's no specific treatment for measles, but the condition usually improves within 7 to 10 days. Your GP will probably suggest taking things easy at home until you're feeling better. Stay away from University for at least four days from when the measles rash first appears to reduce the risk of spreading the infection.

You should also try to avoid contact with people who are more vulnerable to the infection, such as young children, pregnant individuals and people with weakened immune systems.

All staff and students should continue to follow the normal absence management protocol by letting their line manager or School Office know they are unwell.

### **Should I tell the University if I have measles?**

Yes. As with any absence, it is really important that you let your [School](#) Office know that you are unwell and will not be in attendance at class, lectures, tutorials or placement. The School will be able to provide you with support and, if you are well enough to study, may be able to provide you with class materials that you have missed.

### **I am worried about missing University work or assessment.**

It is really important that you focus on your health.

Given the risks to others, including vulnerable people and those who are pregnant, it is equally important that you follow advice to stay at home and minimize the risk of passing on the infection.

If you are worried about the impact on any assessment, please review the information on the [Assessment Support Hub](#), including information on how to submit an application for Exceptional Circumstances (EC).

### **Even if you have told your School you are missing an assessment, you still need to submit an EC application.**

### **I live in University accommodation and have been confirmed as having measles – what should I do?**

If you have been diagnosed with measles, please stay in your room and contact Accommodation Team on 02890974525. We will ensure that you have access to all that you need during your period of isolation.

If you are from UK or Ireland please do not travel home after you have been diagnosed as this will increase the chance of you spreading the infection to others, including vulnerable people. They understand why you may want to go home – but you would significantly increase the risk of harm to others should you come into contact with someone who has not had the MMR and who is vulnerable.

We will do all we can to support you and for the vast majority of young adults, you will recover very quickly.

### **My flatmate has been diagnosed with measles – do I have to isolate?**

If you have had the MMR, or if you have had measles in the past, then the advice will be that you can carry on with normal daily life. However, if you are concerned, please speak to your GP.

If you are someone who has been named as a close contact of someone who has been diagnosed with measles, the PHA will be in touch to ascertain if you need to be advised to take additional precautions based on your personal circumstances.

### **Where can I get additional information and support about measles?**

The [Public Health Agency](#) website has comprehensive information.

**I am worried about the situation – what can I do?**

As well as speaking to your GP about your health, it is always helpful to talk to friends or family when you are worried about something.

Students can also access the [Student Wellbeing Service](#) which has a daily drop-in service in **One Elmwood between 11.00am – 3.00pm, Monday to Friday.**