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**Parents/guardians of children attending schools in Kent and Medway**

15<sup>th</sup> April 2011

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Dear Parent/Guardian

**Re: Measles in Kent and mainland Europe**

This letter is to alert you about a significant increase in confirmed cases of measles in Kent in recent months. Most cases have been in unvaccinated or partially vaccinated children but some adults have also been affected.

**There is considerable risk that your child may catch measles if they are not protected. Unless your child has already received two doses of vaccine, I would advise you to obtain MMR vaccination for them.**

Measles is a highly contagious illness, spread through respiratory droplets (eg, when a person coughs or sneezes) or through direct contact with the person. The illness generally starts with flu-like symptoms, a fever and conjunctivitis. A rash develops three to four days later. Complications of measles are common and include ear infections, pneumonia, bronchitis, convulsions and encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). A rare but fatal complication is a condition known as subacute sclerosing pan-encephalitis.

Measles is very effectively prevented with MMR vaccine. The normal schedule for MMR is first dose at 12-13 months with a second dose at three and a half years of age. If a child (or adult) has not received that schedule, then they should receive two doses three months apart. Where measles protection is urgently required these doses can be given a minimum of one month apart.

Several countries including France, Germany, The Netherlands, Italy and Turkey have seen a sharp increase in the number of cases of measles this year. Anyone travelling to these countries may be at risk and I advise you to ensure your children are vaccinated with two doses of MMR prior to travelling.

If you require further information then please do not hesitate to contact your General Practitioner or NHS Direct, or go to: <http://www.hpa.org.uk/Topics/InfectiousDiseases/InfectionsAZ/Measles> or <http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/Measles> .

Thank you for your assistance.

Yours sincerely



Dr M Chandrakumar, Director