



UK Health  
Security  
Agency

# MMR, MenACWY and coronavirus (COVID-19) vaccine comms toolkit for universities

Helping to protect students from vaccine preventable infectious diseases



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# MMR, MenACWY and COVID-19 vaccine comms toolkit for universities

UK Health Security Agency (UKSHA) needs your help to ensure new and current students are aware of the free NHS vaccines they should be up to date with. This will ensure they can enjoy their university experience in the knowledge they have done everything they can to protect themselves against these diseases:

- MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine
- MenACWY vaccine (protecting against 4 types of meningococcal disease)
- COVID-19 vaccine

With lots of people in confined environments and close mixing, universities can be hot spots for COVID, measles, mumps and meningococcal disease as they present the perfect opportunity for infection to spread.

We are asking for your help to protect your students and vulnerable people in the community by sharing this information with your students, including during their induction period. We have created this toolkit which is full of useful information and resources to get across 3 key messages:

1. Help to protect your health.

It is really important that young people starting or returning to university ensure that they are up to date with their vaccines and check with their GP practice if they're not sure. Ideally, students should arrange to have any vaccines they need before leaving for university or college. If that's not possible, they should make arrangements with their new GP as soon as they can after starting university or college. For COVID-19 vaccination you may need to call 119 or attend a walk-in or pop-up clinic.

2. Be informed.

Students should be aware that infectious diseases can spread easily in university and college communities. Ensure that they know the common signs and symptoms of meningococcal meningitis and septicaemia. It could be life-saving.

3. Get medical advice quickly.

Students should make sure someone knows if they feel ill and check on friends who are unwell, especially if they are self-isolating due to COVID-19. They should get medical advice immediately if they are worried about their own or someone else's health. It is important that they know how to get that advice.

## About the MMR vaccine and mumps and measles

Before the COVID pandemic, we had an increase in measles cases across England as well as large measles outbreaks across Europe. We also had outbreaks of mumps in universities in England. Teenagers and young adults who have not had 2 doses of MMR vaccine are particularly vulnerable to mumps and measles.

Measles is a highly infectious viral illness that can sometimes lead to serious complications and can be fatal in very rare cases.

Mumps is a contagious viral disease and although complications are rare, they can include swelling of the ovaries or testes, meningitis and deafness.

The best protection against mumps and measles is to ensure you have had 2 doses of MMR vaccination. The first dose of MMR is offered to all children at 1 year of age and the second dose is offered at 3 years and 4 months.

We know that some university and college students missed out on their MMR when they were younger – MMR uptake was as low as 80% in 2003. This means that many young people remain unprotected and we have seen measles and mumps cases and outbreaks linked to these age groups.

The MMR vaccine is available for free to any student who has not yet received both doses. If students are unsure whether they are up to date they can contact their GP to check. If they haven't had 2 MMR doses, they should arrange a free catch up vaccination as soon as possible.

## About MenACWY vaccine and meningococcal disease

It is also important to remind students (and freshers in particular) to get the MenACWY vaccine if they missed this at school. This protects against meningococcal disease that can cause meningitis (dangerous swelling of the lining around the brain and spinal column) and septicaemia (blood poisoning) which can trigger sepsis. Meningitis and septicaemia can both be fatal or cause life-changing disabilities.

The MenACWY vaccine is given by a single injection into the upper arm and protects against 4 different kinds of the meningococcal bacteria that cause meningitis and septicaemia: Men A, C, W and Y. It is usually given in school year 9 or 10 but older students up to 25 years may have been vaccinated as part of a catch up campaign.

Some people carry the meningococcal bacteria without any symptoms whilst others can quickly become very ill. Rates of carriage are highest in teenagers and young adults which means they are at more risk of this disease. Meningitis and septicaemia caused by the

aggressive meningitis W strain previously caused a series of cases in young people in the UK.

Students who have not yet had this vaccine should contact their GP to have the MenACWY vaccine before starting university or college. If that's not possible, they should have it as soon as they can after they arrive. The MenACWY vaccine is the best form of protection against these deadly diseases. The vaccine is available to anyone who missed their vaccine at secondary school and to all UK and overseas freshers who have not had the vaccine up to their 25th birthday.

## COVID-19 vaccinations

Anyone aged 16 years and over should have 2 doses of COVID-19 vaccine at least 8 weeks apart and a booster dose 3 months from their last dose to protect them against serious disease and hospitalisation. Having the booster dose is important for longer protection.

If a student has not received all their doses they should arrange to have their vaccinations as soon as possible. Students will be offered the right vaccine for them, which may be the same or different from the vaccines they had before.

Whilst some people do still get COVID-19 infection after vaccination, their symptoms are usually much milder and they are less likely to have complications.

Please encourage students to remain vigilant by:

- regularly washing hands and use alcohol-based sanitiser if soap and water is not available
- maintaining social distancing where possible
- wearing a mask in indoor public places

Students should follow the guidance in your university and town or city. Face masks are still required in certain settings. In accommodation, keep bedrooms and common rooms clean and well aired by opening windows where possible.

# Checklist of activity for universities and colleges

Put information on your website aimed at students and staff about:

- measles, mumps and MMR vaccine
- meningococcal disease and MenACWY vaccine
- COVID-19 disease, testing and vaccine
- putting up posters in key locations including student unions and halls of residence
- involving your pastoral care or student welfare teams in getting the messages out
- using your social media channels to regularly spread the word
- using top 10 checklist to have conversations about MMR, MenACWY and COVID-19 vaccines
- using screensaver, tweets and social media assets included in this toolkit on your own channels
- contacting Heads of departments, Welfare Officers, Deans, Wardens in halls of residence at start of year to alert them to their role should cases of vaccine-preventable diseases occur
- [guidance for Universities and Colleges to inform about signs and symptoms and be prepared for cases of meningococcal disease](#)
- using electronic prompts on computer network log-ins to remind students about the importance of vaccination
- encouraging students to register with a GP and look out for symptoms of COVID-19, measles and meningitis
- making students aware that they should dial 999 without delay in a medical emergency
- students who are concerned and need advice, but do not need urgent care for themselves or another student, that they should call 111 which is the free 24-hour non-emergency health service number in England, Scotland and most areas across Wales (if the 111 number is not available in their area of Wales they should call 0845 46 47, which is charged)
- students can visit NHS111 or NHS111 Wales and [NHS inform](#) in Scotland for online support and signposting
- international students – students from abroad may have different vaccination schedules but they will be eligible for vaccination once in the UK; encourage them to register at a GP practice so they can get up to date
- utilising your student newspaper and student radio help to highlight the message
- the NHS website [MMR \(measles, mumps and rubella\) vaccine](#) as a guide to respond to queries on vaccination
- the NHS website [Getting medical care as a student](#) as a guide for student health queries

If you have further questions, please contact on [phe-pressoffice@phe.gov.uk](mailto:phe-pressoffice@phe.gov.uk) or call 020 8327 7901.

## Key messages

The key messages that can be communicated to both young people and their parents are:

### Be informed

Students should be aware of the symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia and tell someone if they or their friends feel unwell. You can visit the [NHS.UK](https://www.nhs.uk) or [nhsinform.scot](https://nhsinform.scot) to check your symptoms.

Students need to know how to seek medical advice if they become concerned about their own or someone else's health and to do this as early as possible.

In England, Scotland and Wales you can call 111 for advice over the phone or go online to NHS111, NHS111 Wales or [NHS inform](https://www.nhs.uk) in Scotland (If 111 is not available in your area of Wales you can call 0845 46 47).

In a medical emergency do not delay – dial 999.

If you are unwell, tell someone, preferably someone who can check that you are ok and call for help if you are not. Stay in touch with your neighbours and look out for each other.

It is vital for students to register with a GP and get up to date with vaccination as soon as possible.

### Measles

Measles is very infectious, it can cause serious complications and, in rare cases, can be fatal.

Measles can be more severe in young people and adults, often leading to hospital admissions.

Measles starts with cold-like symptoms and sore red eyes followed by a high temperature and a red-brown blotchy rash. If you experience these symptoms, call NHS 111.

The best way to protect yourself against measles is have 2 doses of the MMR vaccine. It is never too late to get the vaccine. There are no risks to your health if you get an extra dose.

Young people are strongly advised to check if they had the MMR vaccine. Check if you have had 2 doses of the vaccine with your GP and arrange a catch up NOW if necessary.

If you suspect you have measles stay away from others for at least 4 days after the rash has appeared.

Call NHS 111 if you think you might have measles or have been in contact with someone who has had it.

## Mumps

Mumps was circulating in England, particularly among 15 to 25 year olds before the COVID-19 pandemic hit and we expect infections to rise again once restrictions ease.

Mumps is a contagious viral infection. It can be painful and in rare cases can lead to the swelling of the ovaries, swelling of testes, meningitis and deafness.

Mumps is recognised by the painful swellings at the side of the face under the ears. However more general symptoms often develop a few days before the face swells.

These can include:

- earache
- joint pain
- feeling sick
- dry mouth
- mild abdominal pain
- feeling tired
- loss of appetite
- a high temperature (fever) of 38C (100.4F), or above

The best way to protect yourself against mumps is have 2 doses of the MMR vaccine. It is never too late to get the vaccine. There are no risks to your health if you get an extra dose.



Anyone with symptoms should stay away from others and stay at home and not return to university until 5 days after the swelling started.

Young people are strongly advised to check if they had the MMR vaccine. Check if you have had 2 doses of the vaccine with your GP and arrange a catch up NOW if necessary.

Call NHS 111 if you think you might have mumps or have been in contact with someone who has had it.

## Meningococcal disease

Meningitis and septicaemia can develop suddenly and can kill or leave people with life changing disabilities and health problems.

Meningococcal disease can be difficult to diagnose because it has been associated with other symptoms, such as severe diarrhoea and vomiting.

Symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia include: a blotchy rash that doesn't fade when a glass is rolled over it, fever, aching muscles and joints and a stiff neck.

The MenACWY vaccine is available free to students who are going to uni for the first time up until their 25th birthday.

Any student born after 1 September 1996 who missed the MenACWY vaccine at secondary school can have the vaccine before their 25th birthday.

Higher Education students, particularly freshers, are known to be at increased risk of meningitis and septicaemia. Being in confined environments with close contact, such as university halls, hostels when travelling, or attending festivals, increase the chances of infection if unprotected.

If you suspect meningitis or septicaemia getting immediate medical treatment can be life-saving. Dial 999 without delay in a medical emergency

## COVID-19 disease

Don't assume that all students are fully informed on COVID disease and vaccine.

COVID-19 signs and symptoms often include a cough, fever and/or loss of taste and smell but other symptoms such as diarrhoea, vomiting and cold-like symptoms can occur.

Students need to know how to seek medical advice if they become concerned about their own or someone else's health and to do this as early as possible.

Early testing can help students be informed and stop them passing on the infection to other people.

Many universities and colleges have had outbreaks of COVID-19. Make sure advice and regulations are clear to all students.

For long term protection, it is really important that students aged 18 years and older have 2 doses of COVID-19 vaccine at least 8 weeks apart and a booster dose 3 months after their last dose.

Wherever students are eligible before arriving at university it is better to have all their doses before leaving home. This means they will be better protected when they arrive.

If they have not yet had a dose that they have been called for or should have been called for they should follow this up with their GP practice, call 119 or attend a walk-in or pop-up clinic.

## Social media channel activity

Follow UKHSA social media accounts for updates:

- [Twitter](#)
  - #Getprotected
  - #MMR
  - #MenACWY
  - #COVIDvaccinations
  - #VaccinesWork hashtags
- [Facebook](#)
- [Instagram](#)

## Twitter

### Template social media posts

You can use any of the social media cards found at the UKHSA website [Getting back together – social media and website graphics for freshers at university.](#)

#### MMR

Measles can kill and is incredibly easy to catch, especially if you are not vaccinated.

Even one young person missing their vaccine is one too many – if you are in any Doubt about your vaccination status, ask your GP – it's never too late to get protected [#ValueofVaccines](#)

Ensure you have 2 doses of [#MMR vaccine from your GP to be protected.](#)

Serious about your studies? Get serious about vaccinations. Make sure you have 2 doses of [MMR vaccine to stay healthy.](#)



  
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## Getting back together

**Mixing with other students means you are more at risk of infectious diseases.**

Make sure you are up to date with your MMR, MenACWY and COVID-19 vaccines at your GP practice before you leave for university. Missed one or more vaccines? Make an appointment with your university GP as soon as possible\*.

\* COVID-19 vaccines may not be provided by your GP; call 119 to make an appointment, or attend a walk-in or pop up clinic

Vaccines save lives. Visit [NHS.UK](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/nhs-vaccinations-and-when-to-have-them) to find out  
[www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/nhs-vaccinations-and-when-to-have-them](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/nhs-vaccinations-and-when-to-have-them)

 **mmunisation**  
Helping to protect everyone at every age

Smart enough to get into #uni? Stay smart: make sure you have had 2 doses of [MMR vaccine](#) to stay healthy too.

It is never too late to have the [#MMR vaccine to protect yourself against mumps and measles](#). If you haven't received 2 doses of the vaccine in the past, or if you're unsure, talk to your GP.

Make sure you're university ready and are up to date with [#MMR vaccine](#) – phone up you're GP practice to check if you've had 2 doses [#Vaccineswork](#)

Going to university this September? Don't forget to get your [#MMR jabs](#) before you go [#Vaccineswork](#)

Clothes, bedding, stationary, jabs – don't forget to get the [#MMR vaccine](#) before reaching university [#Vaccineswork](#)

Check with your GP that you've had your [#MMR vaccine](#) before going to university this September [#Vaccineswork](#)

## MenACWY

Students – make sure meningitis doesn't ruin your uni experience. Get the [#MenACWYvaccine](#) and protect against it.

Clothes, bedding, stationary, jabs... don't forget to get the [#MenACWY vaccine](#) before going to university [#Vaccineswork](#)

Going to uni this September? Make sure you're university ready by getting your [#MenACWY vaccine](#) – phone up you're GP practice to book an appointment [#Vaccineswork](#)

The MenACWY vaccine protects you from 4 strains of potentially fatal meningitis and septicaemia. Students up to the age of 25 can get the vaccine for free [#Vaccineswork](#)

# Useful resources

## UK-wide resources

Detailed UK HEI guidance for the prevention and management of meningococcal disease.

Meningitis Now has developed [Meningitis Aware Recognition Mark \(MARM\)](#) resources for universities. They currently have over 120 universities registered or actively engaged in the programme.

## Suggested communications with students about Meningococcal ACWY (MenACWY) and MMR immunisation

You can download the MenACWY social video here:

<https://www.healthpublications.gov.uk/ViewArticle.html?sp=Smenacwybacktouniversitytoolkitandsocialvideo>

To share on your websites, social media channels and use on screens.



### A short email template

We hope you are enjoying college or university and want to help you stay fit and well during your time here. All students who have not already done so should make sure they are up to date with vaccinations.

1. Meningococcal disease causes meningitis and/or septicaemia (blood poisoning) and can be very severe. If you are under 25 years of age and have not yet had the MenACWY vaccine please ask your GP practice about this.
2. Don't let measles or mumps ruin your time at university. You can help to protect yourself and stop the spread by checking with your GP that you have had 2 doses of the MMR vaccine.
3. Make sure you know the main signs and symptoms of meningococcal disease (meningitis and/or septicaemia) and how to get help or advice if you or one of

your friends feels very unwell, especially if you are getting worse. For more information see [Meningitis Now](#) and [Meningitis Research Foundation](#)

#### Suggested SMS text message (under 160 characters):

University urgent message to freshers: Get your vaccinations up to date, especially MMR and MenACWY. Check with your GP practice now.

Tell someone if you feel ill and look out for friends who are unwell. Get medical advice quickly if you become worried about anyone's health.

Know the main signs and symptoms of meningococcal disease (meningitis and/or septicaemia) see [Meningitis Now](#) and [Meningitis Research Foundation](#).

#### Twitter and/or Facebook Message

Character count – 236

Meningitis and Measles can be very serious. If you are under 25 and in your first year at uni or college, checking you are up to date with your vaccines should be on your list of things to do. More info here [link 20 characters].

#### Video – fastest hour

Character count – 20

Meningitis can kill and kill quickly. If you are under 25 and in your first year at uni or college, checking you are up to date with your vaccines should be on your list of things to do. More info here [link 20 characters].

Character count – 212

Freshers under the age of 25 – add protecting yourself and others against meningitis and measles to your list of things to do. Check you are up-to-date with your vaccines now. More info here [link 20 characters].

#### Share hyperlinks to these videos with more information

[The fastest hour](#) – short video to raise the awareness of meningococcal disease (also available in Welsh) (Meningitis Now, 1 minute).

[Hear from Sophie](#) – an ambassador for the Meningitis Research Foundation (Meningitis Research Foundation, 3 minutes).

[Hear from Charlotte](#) – short video discussing her experience of meningitis (Public Health Wales, 54 seconds)

For further links to [Meningitis Research Foundation's](#) information and resources on MenACWY please see below:

- [UK MenACWY Eligibility checker](#) covers eligibility and includes the download links of our relevant awareness materials
- the Meningitis Research Foundation webpage, [One life, one shot](#) also covers eligibility and includes a video from our member Sharon Sandell
- also on the Meningitis Research Foundation webpage you can find [a factsheet](#) providing detailed information about the MenACWY vaccine

## Resources for England

There is a range of public information resources including leaflets and posters available for download from [Meningococcal ACWY \(MenACWY\) vaccination programme](#) webpage.

Print copies of [MMR, MenACWY and COVID-19 leaflets and posters](#) can be ordered, designed to promote meningococcal awareness and the MenACWY vaccination programme.



Social media cards for instagram or twitter as per the examples below are available from the NHS website [MenACWY](#) and [MMR university social media cards](#).

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## Getting back together

**Mixing and living in halls means you are at more risk of infectious diseases.**

Missed your free routine MMR, MenACWY or COVID-19 vaccines? Make time to check with your university GP and arrange to have them\*. **Don't let infectious disease spoil your time at university.**

\* COVID-19 vaccines may not be provided by your GP. Call 119 to make an appointment, or attend a walk-in or pop up clinic

Vaccines save lives. Visit NHS.UK to find out [www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/nhs-vaccinations-and-when-to-have-them](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/nhs-vaccinations-and-when-to-have-them)

**immunisation**  
Helping to protect everyone at every age

UK Health Security Agency

## Getting back together

**Mixing with other students means you are more at risk of infectious diseases.**

Make sure you are up to date with your MMR, MenACWY and COVID-19 vaccines at your GP practice before you leave for university. Missed one or more vaccines? Make an appointment with your university GP as soon as possible\*.

\* COVID-19 vaccines may not be provided by your GP. Call 119 to make an appointment, or attend a walk-in or pop up clinic

Vaccines save lives. Visit NHS.UK to find out [www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/nhs-vaccinations-and-when-to-have-them](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/nhs-vaccinations-and-when-to-have-them)

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UK Health Security Agency

## Getting back together

**Before leaving for university**

- ✓ Check you are up to date with vaccines
  - 2 doses of MMR vaccine
  - 1 dose of MenACWY vaccine
  - 2 doses and a booster of COVID-19 vaccine
- ✓ Know the signs and symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia
- ✓ Know how to seek

**Once you get to university you should**

- ✓ register with a GP as soon as you can – don't wait until you have a problem
- ✓ arrange with your GP to catch up on any vaccines\* you have missed

\* COVID-19 vaccines may not be provided by your GP. Call 119 to make an appointment, or attend a walk-in or pop up clinic

Vaccines save lives. Visit NHS.UK to find out [www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/nhs-vaccinations-and-when-to-have-them](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/nhs-vaccinations-and-when-to-have-them)

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UK Health Security Agency

## Getting back together

**Before leaving for university**

- ✓ 2 doses of MMR vaccine
- ✓ 1 dose of MenACWY
- ✓ 2 doses and a booster of COVID-19 vaccine
- ✓ know the signs and symptoms of meningitis and septicaemia
- ✓ know how to seek medical advice

Vaccines save lives. Visit NHS.UK to find out [www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/nhs-vaccinations-and-when-to-have-them](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/nhs-vaccinations-and-when-to-have-them)

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## Getting back together

**More face to face means there is a higher risk of catching and passing on infectious diseases, such as COVID-19, measles and meningitis.**

Make sure you have had your 2 doses of MMR and 2 doses and a booster of COVID-19 vaccines. You should have had a single dose of MenACWY vaccine if you are under 25. They are free to all eligible students.

Vaccines save lives. Visit NHS.UK to find out [www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/nhs-vaccinations-and-when-to-have-them](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/nhs-vaccinations-and-when-to-have-them)

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And for universities, [free of charge from the Health Publications ordering website](#).

If you have not already registered it is quick and easy to do so.

## NHS pages

Advice and information is available on the [NHS Choices website](#)

[NHS meningitis](#)

[NHS MMR \(measles, mumps and rubella\) vaccine](#).

[NHS Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

[COVID-19 vaccination: resources for children and young people](#)

## Resources for Northern Ireland

Public information resources on symptoms of meningococcal disease and the ACWY Vaccine Programme available on the [Public Health Agency \(PHA\) student page](#).

## Resources for Scotland

There are a range of resources available in various formats for the public on [NHS inform](#).

Information for professionals and other organisations can be found on Public Health Scotland's [immunisation pages](#).

A Scottish immunisation toolkit for universities and colleges is being produced to help emphasise these important messages with signposting to Scottish contacts and support.

For more information or to request the toolkit, please email:

[p hs.screeningandimmunisation@p hs.scot](mailto:p hs.screeningandimmunisation@p hs.scot)

Follow Public Health Scotland to keep up to date with the latest messages:

Twitter [@P\\_H\\_S\\_Official](#)

Instagram [@publichealthscotland](#)

MMR, MenACWY and COVID-19 vaccine comms toolkit for universities

## Resources for Wales

Stakeholders will be able to access Wales specific assets (including the uni specific materials) via the PHW Comms webpage [MMR, MenACWY and COVID-19 Vaccination](#).

And the PHW [World Health Organisation Measles gif](#).

## UK Health Security Agency blogs

[Why we still see measles outbreaks in the UK](#)

[5 avoidable health threats every student should know about](#)

# About the UK Health Security Agency

UKHSA is responsible for protecting every member of every community from the impact of infectious diseases, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents and other health threats. We provide intellectual, scientific and operational leadership at national and local level, as well as on the global stage, to make the nation health secure.

[UKHSA](#) is an executive agency, sponsored by the [Department of Health and Social Care](#).

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