



MMR and MenACWY vaccinations for students resident at home

September marks the time of the year when many students are starting their first year of university or returning to their studies. Students can be more vulnerable to illnesses such as meningitis and mumps due to living in large households and mixing with new people, increasing the risk of infection. Low uptake of childhood MMR due to the Wakefield scandal has also seen an increase in measles cases in Europe. Traditionally most student health matters would be covered by specialist university practices, but socio-economic factors are increasing the number of students who remain living in the family home, so it may be worth checking the vaccination status of patients of university age.

Around 90,000 new university students will be instructed to have the MMR and MenACWY jab before they start their courses this year. The Royal College of Nursing recently called on soon-to-to university students to make a vaccination appointment in August to build up their immunity before fresher's week. The call comes after it emerged that the number of European cases of measles has reached an eight-year high. According to data from Public Health England (PHE), there were more than 200 cases of meningitis W last year and around 400,000 school leavers were not vaccinated.

The MenACWY vaccine, protects against A, C, W and Y meningococcal bacteria. The vaccine is available for all 17-18 year olds, who should be contacted by their GP during this time, and university entrants between ages 19-25 who would need to make an appointment with their GP.

Many students may have missed out on the MMR vaccine as children, with uptake as low as 80% in 2003, according to PHE. It is advised that students who have not received two doses of the vaccine in the past, or those who are unsure, should speak to their GP. Many universities require students to also get the MenACWY vaccine before moving into student accommodation. All first-year undergraduates are now advised to have a meningitis booster if they were less than 10 years of age when they received their first Meningitis C injection.

In 2016 around 328,000 students in the UK elected to remain in their family home and registration advice for students differs from university to university. For example, the London School of Economics advises students to find a local GP on NHS Choices and register there, while Kings College London has a dedicated student practice, but advises those living outside its catchment area that they may wish to register with a local practice if they have home visiting needs.