

European Immunisation Week 2018

ECDC key messages and data on measles for healthcare professionals

- 1. It is tragic and unacceptable that children and adults in EU countries have continued to die from complications of measles infection in the past 2 years, while safe and effective vaccines are readily available.**
 - All EU countries have measles vaccination programmes in place and vaccination is usually free. It is vital to implement policies that are already existing. See ECDC vaccine scheduler for more information by country. <https://vaccine-schedule.ecdc.europa.eu/>
 - Between 1 January 2017 and 31 December 2017, 14 600 cases of measles were reported by EU/EEA countries which was more than triple the number reported in 2016. Within the broader European region the number of measles cases quadrupled from 2016 to 2017¹.
 - Most cases were reported by Romania (5 608)², Italy, (5 098), Greece (967) and Germany (929), accounting, respectively, for 38%, 35%, 7% and 6% of all cases reported by EU/EEA countries.
 - Thirty-seven deaths due to measles were reported during 2017; with 26 in Romania, four in Italy, two in Greece, and one each in Bulgaria, France, Germany, Portugal and Spain.
- 2. Most measles cases are in infants below one year of age, a group who also have the highest incidence of complications and death.³**
 - This group are best protected by high vaccination coverage (95%) in the rest of the population as they are too young to be vaccinated (herd immunity)
 - The highest incidence was reported in children below one year of age (365.9 cases per million)
 - In 2017, 1 875 cases aged below one year accounted for 13% of all cases reported
- 3. Measles does not only affect children. Measles also affects teenagers and adults and can lead to serious complications and fatalities in all ages⁴**
 - Many teenagers and adults do not realise that they are susceptible to measles. They may have missed vaccination (and not have had the disease). It is important they are also targeted for vaccination.
 - Of 14 600 cases with known age, 6 512 (45%) were aged 15 years or older.
 - Adults, as well as children under five, are at the highest risk of serious complications and death.
- 4. Vaccination with at least two doses of measles-containing vaccine is the most effective measure to prevent against disease and its possible complications⁵**
 - Of 13 753 cases with known vaccination status, 87% were unvaccinated, 8% were vaccinated with one dose, 3% were vaccinated with two or more doses, and 2% were vaccinated with an unknown number of doses. Of all cases, 6% had an unknown vaccination status.
 - 10% of adolescents and young adult cases (15-29 year olds) had an unknown vaccination status. It is important that all people in the population can retrieve their documented vaccination status. Healthcare professionals play an important role and recording of vaccination through electronic registers may facilitate keeping up-to-date with vaccines received.

¹ <http://www.euro.who.int/en/media-centre/sections/press-releases/2018/europe-observes-a-4-fold-increase-in-measles-cases-in-2017-compared-to-previous-year>

² Count excludes an estimated 2200 cases from Romania which are not yet reported to ECDC, due to the outbreak-related workload. The most up-to-date data are available from the [Romanian National Institute of Public Health \(INSP\)](#).

³ WHO position paper on measles 2017 http://www.who.int/immunization/policy/position_papers/measles/en/

⁴ Plotkin SA, Orenstein WA, Offit PA, Edwards KM. Vaccines. 7th ed. ed. Philadelphia, PA: Elsevier; 2018.

⁵ WHO position paper on measles 2017 http://www.who.int/immunization/policy/position_papers/measles/en/

- As part of its activities in support of the establishment of electronic registers in EU/EEA Member States, ECDC has developed 2 surveys on Immunisation Information Systems (IIS) status and functionalities. The [ECDC Survey Report on IIS](#) presents the results providing information on the status of IIS in the EU/EEA countries and describes their functionalities.
- 5. With your help, measles and rubella elimination is within reach. Finishing the job requires at least 95% vaccination coverage with two doses in every district and community.**
- Vaccination coverage in 2016 for the second dose of measles-containing vaccine was below 95% in 22 of the 29 EU/EEA countries with data.
 - If the elimination goal is to be reached, vaccination coverage rates for the general population will have to be increased in these countries.
 - Immunisation gaps must also be closed through catch up campaigns with efforts to identify susceptible children, teenagers and adults who have missed opportunities for vaccination in the past.
- 6. Measles outbreaks are ongoing in Europe - don't run the risk of coming home with measles.**
- As people are planning their holidays it is important to inform them of ongoing measles outbreaks in Europe and make sure they and their family have received 2 doses of measles-containing vaccine before travel.