

# Health News 2023

## Covid19

Numbers in Oxfordshire are declining, but the virus is with us to stay. To stay abreast of current numbers in Oxfordshire, the data on [this page](#) is updated weekly.

Guidance for parents remains the same as it was last academic year. If your child tests positive for Covid, keep them off school for 3 days. As long as they are well enough and do not have a temperature, they can return to school without a negative test. If you suspect Covid, but do not test, keep them off school for 3 days from the start of symptoms and return to school once they are well enough and do not have a temperature.

We have a duty of care to our wider school community to keep children as well as possible. We have families with children who are immunosuppressed and more susceptible to illness. We are grateful to our families for their understanding in this matter.

As always, please contact the school if you are unsure of a situation or you would like our advice.

## Measles

Measles cases are rising across the country, with over 102,000 children starting primary school in England being at risk of catching the disease.

Measles is highly infectious and if left unvaccinated nine out of ten children in an early years setting can catch the disease if just one child is infectious. Around day 3 of the illness, a rash of flat red or brown blotches appear, beginning on the face, behind the ears and spreading over the body. The incubation period is between 10 to 12 days but can vary from 7 to 21 days.

Childhood vaccination rates have fallen over the past ten years and this week statistics show that over 102,000 children aged four and five years old starting in reception are not protected against catching measles, mumps and rubella.

Measles is highly infectious and if left unvaccinated nine out of ten children in a classroom can catch the disease if just one child is infectious. If you are unsure if you or your child are up to date, check your child's red book or GP records and make an appointment to catch up any missed doses. For more information on the NHS vaccination schedule, please [visit](#).

## Text messages to invite and recall children for their routine early childhood vaccinations?

NHS England, as commissioners of Child Health Information Services (CHIS), working in collaboration with NHS South, Central and West (NHS SCW), would be grateful for your support in collecting the views of parents, carers and health care professionals regarding the use of text messages to



invite and recall children for their routine early childhood vaccinations. [Complete this survey](#) to have your say by 22nd January 2024.

## Signs and Symptoms of Scarlet Fever

Scarlet fever is a common childhood infection caused by *Streptococcus pyogenes* or Group A Streptococcus (GAS). It is not usually serious but should be treated with antibiotics.

The early symptoms of scarlet fever include sore throat, headache, fever, nausea and vomiting. After 12 to 48 hours, the characteristic red, pinhead rash develops, typically first appearing on the chest and stomach, then rapidly spreading to other parts of the body, and giving the skin a sandpaper-like texture. The scarlet rash may be harder to spot on darker skin, although the 'sandpaper' feel should be present.

Children and adults with suspected scarlet fever should be excluded from nursery / school / work until 24 hours after the commencement of appropriate antibiotic treatment.

## Gastroenteritis / Norovirus Factsheet

### Gastroenteritis

Gastroenteritis refers to a condition in which a stomach bug, usually a virus, infects the gut and gives rise to symptoms such as diarrhoea and vomiting.

### Norovirus

- Norovirus, also known as the 'winter vomiting bug' is the most common cause of gastroenteritis in England and Wales.
- Norovirus affects people of all ages and spreads easily from person to person.
- The virus is transmitted by direct contact with an infected person, consuming contaminated food or water or by coming into contact with contaminated surfaces or objects.

### Symptoms

Sudden onset nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea, usually 1-2 days after becoming infected. Other symptoms may include fever, a headache and body aches.

### Stay at Home

Stay off school or work until you have not been sick or had diarrhoea for **at least 48 hours**.

### Recovery

- There is no specific treatment for norovirus and most people will make a full recovery in 2-3 days without needing medical assessment or medication.

- Some people (usually the very young or elderly) may become very dehydrated and require hospital admission. It is therefore important to drink plenty of fluids during the illness to avoid dehydration.
- Those with diarrhoea and vomiting should try and avoid attending A&E or their GP surgery unless advised to do so by a healthcare professional as this can spread the virus to others.

## Prevention

- Good hand hygiene is essential to preventing Norovirus from spreading.
- Hands should be washed thoroughly using soap and water (not alcohol gel) after using the toilet, before preparing and eating food and after contact with a sick person. Alcohol gel is not effective against norovirus, but it can be used in addition to soap and water.
- Children should be encouraged to wash their hands after using the toilet, after play, before eating and on arrival and departure from school (to ensure they do not bring the infection to school or take it home).
- For younger children handwashing should take place under supervision to ensure proper technique.
- Any contaminated clothing or bedding should be washed with detergent at 60°C.
- Surfaces and touch points (taps, toilet flush handle, door handles) should be cleaned and disinfected with a bleach-based cleaner.
- Stay off school or work until you have not been sick or had diarrhoea for at least 48 hours.

## Energy bill and home warmth support this winter

The [Better Housing Better Health](#) service which is commissioned by all the local authorities in Oxfordshire can support people who are finding it difficult to stay warm in their homes. Some of this support can include short term measures such as emergency fuel vouchers.

Alongside it will come with either advice and support over the phone or a home visit, to help understand and address underlying issues, such as fuel bill problems, so a longer-term solution can be found. They also make onward referrals or signposts as appropriate to help manage debt or other housing issues related to the condition of the home eg [damp/mould](#).

Families or young adults who might be finding it hard to stay warm at home or manage their heating costs, to consider a referral or signpost to BHBH to see what help might be available. It's free, independent and local and this year there are more [energy efficiency schemes](#) for insulation and heating as well as increased funding to help with heating costs, such as energy saving cooking appliances, so it's worth a call (0800 107 0044) to see what is possible.