# Measles cases double in Europe as vaccination rates plummet



# The Resurgence of Measles: A 21st Century Public Health Challenge

A highly contagious infectious disease, measles, is spreading through Europe, raising alarms among health authorities. Echoing the crises of the Victorian era, the current outbreak signals a troubling resurgence of a disease once relegated to the past. The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF report that the European Region recorded 127,350 measles cases in 2024, doubling from 2023 and marking the highest incidence since 1997. The trend escalates concerns regarding public health, particularly for vulnerable populations such as young children.

In the first few months of 2025 alone, around 4,500 cases have been reported across the European Union, as highlighted by the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC). Most alarmingly, Romania has become the epicentre of this outbreak, accounting for over 3,200 infections, including four deaths. The country's medical system is reportedly overwhelmed due to an anti-vaccine movement, alongside conflicting health guidance. This is exemplified by a vaccination rate of only 62% for measles in 2023, starkly below the critical 95% threshold needed for herd immunity.

The data further reveals that children under the age of five represent a significant portion of those affected. According to WHO research, approximately 40% of infections during this surge involve young children, with more than half requiring hospitalisation. The ramifications of declining vaccination rates, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, cannot be overstated. Many countries have seen a worrying drop in vaccination uptake; for instance, in Romania, less than 80% of eligible children received the first dose of the measles vaccine last year. This environment of reduced immunisation has set the stage for resurgent outbreaks in other European nations as well.

Countries such as Italy and France are also feeling the impact, with 227 and 345 reported cases respectively as of early 2025. In France, at least 41 infections have been linked to a traveller from Morocco, signalling the ways in which global travel can exacerbate local health crises. Though vaccination rates in Spain peaked at a commendable 92%, leading to near herd immunity, ongoing outbreaks still pose a threat, largely stemming from imported cases.

Moreover, health experts emphasise the importance of reviving vaccination programmes. Comprehensive immunisation with the Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) vaccine, which is 97% effective after two doses, is vital in curbing the spread of measles. The ECDC has underscored that proactive vaccination efforts can help navigate this public health challenge. As the agency aptly notes, “The best way to ensure health security is through vaccination.”

While the urgency of the current situation is clear, it also serves as a reminder of the multifaceted nature of public health communication. Efforts to combat misinformation about vaccine safety, which has deterred many from immunisation, must become a priority. The ongoing discussions and strategies must not only focus on immediate vaccination drives but also address the societal narratives surrounding vaccine hesitancy.

As measles continues to spread across Europe, the convergence of declining vaccination rates, misinformation, and chaotic health messaging illustrates a public health crisis that is not only historical but alarmingly modern. The time for action is now, calling for robust vaccination campaigns and community education to protect vulnerable populations from the resurgence of this preventable yet contagious disease.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/2051964/victorian-disease-spreading-europe-country-cases> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://apnews.com/article/2f888732cc297090238956986fd89cc4> - In 2024, measles cases in Europe and Central Asia surged to 127,350, doubling from the previous year and reaching the highest level since 1997, according to WHO and UNICEF. Romania and Kazakhstan were the hardest hit, with over 30,000 and 28,147 cases respectively. Approximately 40% of infections were in children under 5, and over half of those infected required hospitalization. Measles is highly contagious and preventable with a vaccine that is 97% effective after two doses. However, vaccination rates have declined, particularly in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, and need to exceed 95% to prevent outbreaks. The rise in cases follows diminished immunization during the COVID-19 pandemic. Misinformation about vaccine safety continues to hinder vaccination efforts. In the UK, more than 200 cases were reported recently, and the US is also experiencing outbreaks in Texas and New Mexico. Experts stress the importance of vaccination to ensure health security.
* <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/news-events/measles-rise-again-europe-time-check-your-vaccination-status> - Between 1 February 2024 and 31 January 2025, the European Union and European Economic Area reported 32,265 measles cases, a significant increase from 2023. Romania reported the highest number of cases, with 27,568 infections and 18 deaths attributed to measles. The majority of those diagnosed were unvaccinated, highlighting gaps in vaccination coverage. The European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) emphasizes the importance of immunization with two doses of the Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) vaccine to prevent further outbreaks.
* <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/european-region-reports-highest-number-measles-cases-more-25-years-unicef-whoeurope> - In 2024, the European Region reported 127,350 measles cases, doubling from the previous year and marking the highest number since 1997, according to WHO and UNICEF. Children under five accounted for more than 40% of reported cases, and over half required hospitalization. Romania reported the highest number of cases, with 30,692 infections. The decline in vaccination rates during the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to the resurgence, with less than 80% of eligible children in several countries, including Romania, vaccinated with the first dose of the measles vaccine in 2023.
* <https://www.who.int/europe/news/item/13-03-2025-european-region-reports-highest-number-of-measles-cases-in-more-than-25-years---unicef--who-europe> - The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNICEF report that in 2024, the European Region saw 127,350 measles cases, doubling from the previous year and reaching the highest level since 1997. Children under five accounted for more than 40% of reported cases, and over half required hospitalization. Romania reported the highest number of cases, with 30,692 infections. The decline in vaccination rates during the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to the resurgence, with less than 80% of eligible children in several countries, including Romania, vaccinated with the first dose of the measles vaccine in 2023.
* <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/measles-cases-european-region-doubled-2024-more-than-25-year-high-who-says-2025-03-13/> - In 2024, measles cases in the European region doubled to a more than 25-year-high, according to the WHO and UNICEF. Children under five accounted for more than 40% of the 127,350 cases reported across 53 countries in Europe and Central ... . Romania reported the highest number of cases with 30,692, followed by Kazakhstan with ... . The rise in cases has been attributed to lower vaccination rates during the COVID-19 pandemic ... with less than 80% of ... several countries, including Romania, vaccinated with the first dose of the measles ... .
* <https://www.euronews.com/health/2025/03/12/measles-cases-expected-to-grow-in-coming-months-european-health-authorities-warn> - Measles cases in Europe have increased more than tenfold over the past year, with health authorities urging people to ensure they are vaccinated against the highly contagious disease. From early 2024 to early 2025, more than 32,000 measles cases were reported in the European Union, Iceland, Liechtenstein, and Norway, a significant increase from 2023. Romania reported the highest number of cases, with 27,568 infections, followed by Italy, Germany, Belgium, and Austria. The vast majority of infected individuals—86%—were unvaccinated, highlighting gaps in vaccination coverage.