

Health Protection Newsletter – Summer Edition



Volume 4 | Issue 2 | Summer 2025

It's finally that time of the year again: lots of sunshine, long days, warm weather, picnics, barbeques and holidays! We know you are excited for summer just as we are and have got lot of plans with your family and loved ones. As always, we wanted to provide you with gentle reminders to keep you all safe and have a blast this summer!

Tall Ships 2025

Eating Outdoors

Blue Green Algae

Rabies

ICON

World Hepatitis Day 2025

Immunisation Update

Measles & Chickenpox

Disease Surveillance Data

Tall Ships 2025

The Tall Ships are a fleet of around 50 historic ships which travel the globe, showcasing the vessels to the public and competing in races. This year, Aberdeen will play host to the Tall Ships Races from the 19th to 22nd July. Tall Ships is the largest free family event in Europe and has been hosted in many countries internationally since 1978. The Tall Ships will be situated at the Port of Aberdeen within the city centre.

The Tall Ships Races will give the public an opportunity to view ships of a variety of sizes and ages from all around the world. The fleet arrives in Aberdeen on Friday, 18th of July from Dunkirk in France, with the official event opening Saturday, 19th July and will head for Kristiansand in Norway on Tuesday, the 22nd July. You can find much more about the event here: [What's On | Tall Ships Aberdeen](#)

Over the four day event, there will be crew parties, captains' dinner parties, as well as crew sports, parades and prize giving ceremonies. On Monday evening, Aberdeen is also lucky enough to be hosting a flyover display from the Red Arrows.

Street food stalls, bars and craft markets will be open to the public on quayside, showcasing an array of local businesses and produce. Quayside concerts are happening each night of this event with headliner acts such as Deacon Blue and the Kaiser Chiefs. Educational activities will be available at the Castlegate, including a Discovery Zone with Macduff Aquarium, Techfest STEM activities, the Aberdeen Science Centre and much more including a fun fair in the city centre for the duration of the event. There will be lots of activities free to attend and enjoy with family and friends from 9am each day.

As there is such a wide variety of food and drink stalls and activities coming to the Tall Ships, the Environmental Health team at Aberdeen City Council will be playing a crucial role in protecting public health working with the event planners. 400,000 visitors are expected to come through Aberdeen over the course of the event, so it is vital the all risks to safety are properly managed.

The Environmental Health team will work closely with partners, advisors and stakeholders to maintain food safety and health and safety compliance.



You can contact the Health Protection Team at: NHS Grampian Health Protection Team.

Address: Summerfield House, 2 Eday Road, Aberdeen.

Phone: 01224 558520 Email: gram.healthprotection@nhs.scot

Eating Outdoors

Avoiding food poisoning at your barbeque

Microorganisms in raw meats, such as campylobacter in chicken, can cause food poisoning, which is often unpleasant and can be serious.

Following the “4Cs” of food hygiene, Cleaning, Chilling, Cooking and avoiding Cross Contamination will help you prepare, make and store food safely

- Make sure any frozen food is completely thawed before you cook it.
- Adhere to the use-by dates on food packaging as out of date food can make you unwell.
- Keeping raw meat separate from other foods to avoid cross-contamination. You can use sealed containers to help separate raw and cooked food.
- Using different plates, chopping boards and utensils for raw and cooked meat.
- Not using a sauce or marinade for cooked food that's had raw meat in it.

Cooking food on a barbeque safely

During barbecue season, the temptation can be to cook everything quickly before the rain comes on. It's important to cook food for the correct length of time and at the right temperature. You can do this by:

- Waiting for the charcoal to glow red with a powdery grey surface to start cooking. Flames will blacken the outside of food but leave the middle raw.
- Rotating food on the barbecue so it cooks evenly.
- Checking the centre of the food to make sure it is cooked before serving — steam should be coming out of it.
- Making sure chicken, pork, burgers, sausages and kebabs are cooked all the way through. They should be steaming hot, there should be no pink meat and the juices should run clear. Meat isn't necessarily cooked inside just because it looks charred on the outside.
- By far the best thing you can do to make sure food is cooked properly is to use a food thermometer. Insert it into the thickest part of the meat and when it reaches 75°C or above it is fully cooked. Pre-cooking food in the oven, pan or grill first is a great way to have more control, then finish it off on the barbecue for that chargrilled flavour.



You can contact the Health Protection Team at: NHS Grampian Health Protection Team.

Address: Summerfield House, 2 Eday Road, Aberdeen.

Phone: 01224 558520 Email: gram.healthprotection@nhs.scot

Serving food safely

Simple steps can make sure you serve food safely once you're ready to eat.

- Wash your hands regularly with soap and water before eating and always after handling raw meat/poultry.
- Keep hot food hot and cold food cold until you are ready to eat. Any foods which you would usually keep in the fridge at home also need to be kept cool at your barbecue. You can use a cool box or bag with ice, frozen gel packs or frozen drinks distributed evenly throughout to help keep your food cold.
- Keep anything ready to eat, like salad, away from raw meat to avoid spreading any harmful bacteria to foods that won't be cooked.

Picnics

Apart from the threat of some unwelcome rain clouds, the other thing that can ruin your picnic is food poisoning, here are some picnic tips:

- Wicker baskets are cute, but cool bags are much better at keeping your food chilled.
- Keep food in the fridge until you need it to keep it as cool as possible for travelling. This is especially important if it contains cream, meat or poultry.
- Always wash fruit and vegetables – if you do this before setting off, your fruit and veg will be clean and ready to eat when you start your picnic.
- Cover your food from birds, insects, dogs and any other unwanted picnic thieves.

Blue Green Algae (Cyanobacteria)

What is blue-green algae?

Blue-green algae are tiny organisms which occur naturally in lochs, ponds, reservoirs, and rivers. They commonly occur during periods of prolonged hot weather but can occur at other times of the year. Waters affected by agricultural, domestic or industrial discharges, can also be prone to developing blue-green algae. In still waters the algae can multiply to such an extent that they discolour the water which then appears green, blue-green, greenish brown or dark brown. Sometimes a scum may form on the surface, most commonly found at the water's edge.

How do blue-green algae affect humans and animals?

Some, but not all the blue-green algae produce toxins and release these into the water. It is not possible to tell which algae produce toxins simply by their appearance, therefore it is advisable to regard all algal scums as potentially toxic.

The toxins of blue-green algae can be fatal to animals, either by drinking contaminated water, swallowing quantities of scum; shoreline matter, crust or by licking their coats that have been contaminated by the algae/toxins. If affected dogs (or other animals) can deteriorate very quickly and effects may occur after very little contact.



You can contact the Health Protection Team at: NHS Grampian Health Protection Team.

Address: Summerfield House, 2 Eday Road, Aberdeen.

Phone: 01224 558520 Email: gram.healthprotection@nhs.scot

Canoeists, wind surfers and swimmers who have either swum through algal scum or swallowed it have experienced symptoms such as skin rashes, eye irritation, muscle/joint pain, vomiting and diarrhoea. Illnesses can be severe, especially if the water has been swallowed.

What should I do about blue-green algae?

Be vigilant when using watercourses or shorelines. When in doubt, stay out.

1. Avoid all contact with the affected waters and ensure that children are kept away.
2. Do not let your pets and other animals go into or drink the water or eat the scum
3. Do not drink the water or use it for cooking
4. Farmers should ensure that their animals do not have access to contaminated water. This may require fencing around suspect waters.
5. If you must swim or enter the watercourse or loch, keep away from the algae and scum
6. If you believe your pet may have been exposed to blue green algae then contact your vet as soon as possible to get advice.

If any member of the public finds areas of water they believe may be affected with blue-green algae, take a photo and report it on the [Bloomin' Algae website](#) or app, and report it to the Councils environmental health.

Rabies

Rabies is a viral notifiable disease posing a significant global health issue, causing approximately 59,000 human deaths annually across more than 150 countries.

Despite being preventable through vaccination, the disease continues to mainly affect regions with limited access to healthcare, preventive measures and veterinary official controls. Over 95% of deaths occur in Africa and Asia. Nearly 40% of those affected are children under the age of 15. Dogs are responsible for transmitting rabies in approximately 99% of human cases.

The virus affects the central nervous system transmitted through the saliva of an infected animal. All mammals are susceptible, with dogs, cats (especially in developing countries) and wildlife playing a key role in the maintaining the disease. Infection usually occurs via bite wounds, or because infected saliva enters an open cut/scratch, wound or mucous membrane, such as those in the mouth, nasal cavity or eyes. Following exposure, the virus will enter the central nervous system and cause a "prodromal" stage (early signs of disease) before progressing to an "excitement" stage (furious rabies) and finally a paralytic stage and eventually death.

Rabies is preventable through vaccination (dogs and humans), administering Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) promptly after potential exposure, and educating communities about avoiding dog bites and seeking timely treatment.



You can contact the Health Protection Team at: NHS Grampian Health Protection Team.

Address: Summerfield House, 2 Eday Road, Aberdeen.

Phone: 01224 558520 Email: gram.healthprotection@nhs.scot

If you are bitten or scratched by a bat in the UK or any mammal in countries where rabies is present in other animals, you should wash the wound thoroughly with soap and water then disinfect it. You should immediately contact a doctor for treatment. Whilst rabies has been eradicated from the UK, a strain of the disease (European bat lyssavirus) continues to be present (rarely) in bats in this country. People handling bats regularly should be vaccinated as a precaution. All bats should be assumed possible carriers of bat rabies so avoid touching bats, living or dead, whenever possible and if it is necessary to do so wear thick gloves to avoid being bitten or scratched. Biting and/or scratching incidents from native UK wildlife **except bats**, should not give immediate rise to the suspicion of rabies, unless other risk factors are identified.

In Europe, rabies risk varies significantly across countries. While many Western European countries are officially rabies-free, others—particularly in Eastern Europe and areas bordering endemic regions still face higher risk.

United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Germany, Spain, Italy, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Portugal, Denmark, Switzerland, Austria, Belgium and Netherlands have eradicated rabies and have strong surveillance and control measures.

Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Moldova still report rabies cases in wildlife (especially foxes, raccoon dogs, and stray dogs), or have endemic rabies in certain regions.

If traveling to a rabies-risk country and are planning outdoor activities (e.g., hiking, biking, caving, camping) in remote areas far from medical care; working with animals (vets, researchers, volunteers, animal shelter work); travelling with children, who may not report bites or scratches or are a frequent or long-term traveller to rabies-endemic areas - vaccination is highly recommended. It is important to consider all vaccinations you require well in advance of travel *at least* 6 weeks before you travel. You should also avoid contact with stray dogs, cats, bats, and wild animals, don't pet or feed animals, even if they appear friendly, supervise children closely and know the location of rabies treatment centres before travel.

If bitten or scratched by an animal in a higher risk country, you should seek medical advice promptly. They will make a risk assessment of the injury and decide if you need to have a course of vaccine and possibly Rabies immunoglobulin. The post exposure vaccination course is 4 injections over the course of 3 weeks. If you are returning home during this time you should contact your GP and advise that you have potentially been exposed to rabies. Your GP will arrange for review and vaccination with the Infectious Disease team at ARI in order that your course of vaccination is uninterrupted.

- Rabies Guidance: <https://publichealthscotland.scot/media/21695/2023-09-04-rabies-guidance-prep-and-pet-scotland-v2-1pdf.pdf>
- For Travel health advice: [Home - Fit for Travel](#)
- GOV.UK [Rabies: how to spot and report the disease in animals](#)
- GOV.UK [Bringing your pet dog, cat or ferret to Great Britain: What you need to do](#)
- [Rabies - NHS](#)
- World Health Organisation: [Control of Neglected Tropical Diseases](#)
- [Department of Health](#): protocols for rabies vaccination and post-exposure treatment

You can contact the Health Protection Team at: NHS Grampian Health Protection Team.

Address: Summerfield House, 2 Eday Road, Aberdeen.

Phone: 01224 558520 Email: gram.healthprotection@nhs.scot

ICON

We are committed to delivering the newly launched ICON programme throughout Grampian. ICON supports parents and carers to cope with a crying baby and prevents the risk of Abusive Head Trauma (AHT).

This programme will be delivered by midwives, health visitors, and family nurses and has four key messages:

- I - Infant crying is normal, and it will stop.
- C - Comfort methods will sometimes help, and the crying will stop.
- O - It's ok to walk away if the baby is safe and the crying is getting to you.
- N - Never ever shake or hurt a baby

There are lots of resources available to support this programme. [This poster](#) is funded by The Archie Foundation and is being widely distributed. Further information is available on the ICON website [Home - ICON Cope](#). This short (3 minute) [animation](#) may also be helpful, and if you scan the QR code below you'll be able access a range of information leaflets.



World Hepatitis Day 2025



World Hepatitis day is on July 28th. It is an annual event providing a great opportunity to raise awareness of viral hepatitis.

We've only got one life, and we've only got one liver. Hepatitis can devastate both. A liver silently performs over 500 vital functions every single day to keep us alive. That's why prioritising liver health – and knowing our hepatitis status – is so important.

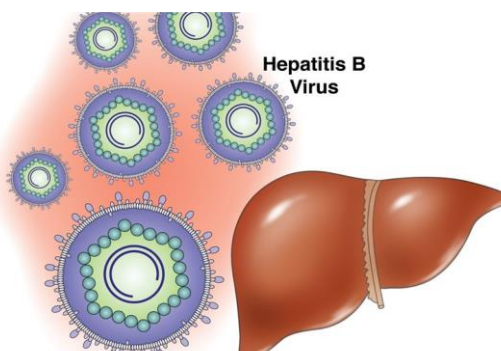
Viral hepatitis is a global health crisis, causing over a million deaths worldwide each year, despite having the means to prevent and treat these diseases. It is estimated that around 39,000 people across Scotland are chronically affected by hepatitis C, with just under half not yet aware of their infection. Available data shows that hepatitis B affects approximately 9000 people in Scotland, with more than half unaware of their infection. In Grampian our aim is to find and treat people who are affected by viral hepatitis, and to spread the word about how to prevent infection. We need to do this as quickly as possible so that people living with untreated chronic hepatitis have access to life saving treatment.

What is viral hepatitis?

Hepatitis C and Hepatitis B (Hep C and Hep B) are blood borne viruses (BBVs) which are carried in the blood. These viruses cause inflammation of the liver, damaging it over time and eventually impeding its ability to carrying out vital functions. Over a long period of time, this can lead to serious liver damage such as cirrhosis or liver cancer.

How are BBVs passed on?

- Unprotected sex (sex without a condom)
- Sharing needles or other drug injecting equipment including snorting equipment and pipes.
- Skin puncture by blood contaminated sharp instruments such as needlestick injury, tattoo, body piercing or aesthetic procedures.
- Receiving medical/dental treatment or blood products overseas
- Received a blood transfusion or blood products in the UK before 1991
- Exposure to blood e.g. into open cut, penetrating human bite, sharing razors or toothbrushes.
- From an infected mother to her child, usually during delivery or breastfeeding



You can contact the Health Protection Team at: NHS Grampian Health Protection Team.

Address: Summerfield House, 2 Eday Road, Aberdeen.

Phone: 01224 558520 Email: gram.healthprotection@nhs.scot

How can you prevent getting a BBV?

- Use a condom when having sex
- Never share needles, syringes, water or any other paraphernalia if you use or inject drugs. Use fresh, clean equipment every time you inject, snort or smoke.
- Use a licensed practitioner if you are getting a tattoo, piercing or any other procedure involving skin puncture
- Keep cuts and wounds clean and covered with a waterproof dressing
- Wear rubber gloves to clean up blood spills and follow Standard Infection Control Precaution Guidelines - <https://www.nipcm.scot.nhs.uk>
- PrEP - Pre Exposure Prophylaxis for HIV found at <https://www.nhsinform.scot/hiv-prep-pre-exposure-prophylaxis>
- PEP - Post Exposure Prophylaxis for HIV found at <https://www.nhsinform.scot/illnesses-and-conditions/immune-system/hiv>
- Never share toothbrushes or razors.
- Hepatitis B vaccine available for people at risk and also part of the childhood vaccination programme since 2017

Treatment

Treatment is available for all BBVs to prevent serious illness and death. Hep C can be treated and cured with a short course of tablets. Treatments are available for Hep B to keep the affected person healthy.

Get tested - it's better to know so that you can get treated, stay healthy and prevent others becoming infected.

You can get a test at your GP, at Grampian Sexual Health Services or by ordering a postal testing kit at gram.bbvpostaltesting@nhs.scot or calling 08085 202030.

For further information:

- [mvc-230347---blood-borne-viruses-bbv---what-you-need-to-know-version-06.pdf](#)
- <https://www.nhsgrampian.org/your-health/healthy-living/hepatitis-c/>
- NHS Grampian Liver Service – 01224 554757

IMMUNISATION UPDATES

Pneumococcal

The pneumococcal vaccine is available in Scotland for all children under 2 years of age, and people aged 65 years and over. It is also available to people under 65 (including children) who fall into one of the eligible risk groups.

Children receive 2 doses in childhood, most people aged 65 and over only need a single dose of the vaccine, which will provide lifelong protection.

People with a long term health condition will be offered either a one-off single dose or one dose every five years depending on their underlying health condition. Please attend to be immunised if you receive an invitation for pneumococcal vaccine.

Pneumococcal infection is caused by streptococcus pneumoniae bacteria.

It can cause serious illnesses, such as bronchitis, pneumonia, septicaemia and meningitis

Childhood Vaccination Schedule Changes

Following a detailed review by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) some changes to the childhood vaccination schedule will be implemented from July 2025. With further changes from January 2026.

Effective from 1 July 2025

1. Discontinuation of Hib/MenC (*Menitorix*) Vaccine at 1 Year

Children born on or after 1 July 2024 will no longer receive the combined Hib/MenC vaccine at their one-year immunisation appointment as Menitorix will no longer be manufactured. MenC protection will continue through the adolescent MenACWY vaccination programme (GOV.UK)

2. Adjustments to MenB and PCV13 Vaccination Schedule

- The second dose of the MenB vaccine will be administered at 12 weeks instead of 16 weeks, to provide earlier protection.
- The first dose of the PCV13 vaccine will be moved from 12 weeks to 16 weeks to avoid increasing the number of injections at the 12-week visit (GOV.UK).

You can contact the Health Protection Team at: NHS Grampian Health Protection Team.

Address: Summerfield House, 2 Eday Road, Aberdeen.

Phone: 01224 558520 Email: gram.healthprotection@nhs.scot

3. Changes to the Selective Neonatal Hepatitis B Program

For infants born on or after 1 July 2024, monovalent HepB vaccine dose at one year will be removed from the schedule. These children will receive an additional dose of the hexavalent vaccine at 18 months (January 2026 changes). The Dried Blood Spot (DBS) testing for HepB surface antigen can now be performed anytime from one year to 18 months of age (GOV.UK).

Summary of changes

Age	Previous Schedule	New Schedule (from effective dates)
8 weeks	1 st DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB, 1 st MenB, 1 st Rotavirus	No Change
12 weeks	2 nd DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB, 1 st PCV, 2 nd Rotavirus	2 nd DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB, 2 nd MenB (July 25), 2 nd Rotavirus
16 weeks	3 rd DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB, 2 nd MenB	3 rd DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB, 1 st PCV13 (July 25)
1 year	Hib/MenC, 2 nd PCV13, 1 st MMR, 3 rd MenB	2 nd PCV13, 1 st MMR, 3 rd MenB (Hib/MenC removed - July 25)
18 months	Not applicable	4 th DTaP/IPV/Hib/HepB (January 26), 2 nd MMR (January 26)
3yr 4mths	2 nd MMR, dTaP/IPV	dTaP/IPV 2 nd MMR moved to 18 months

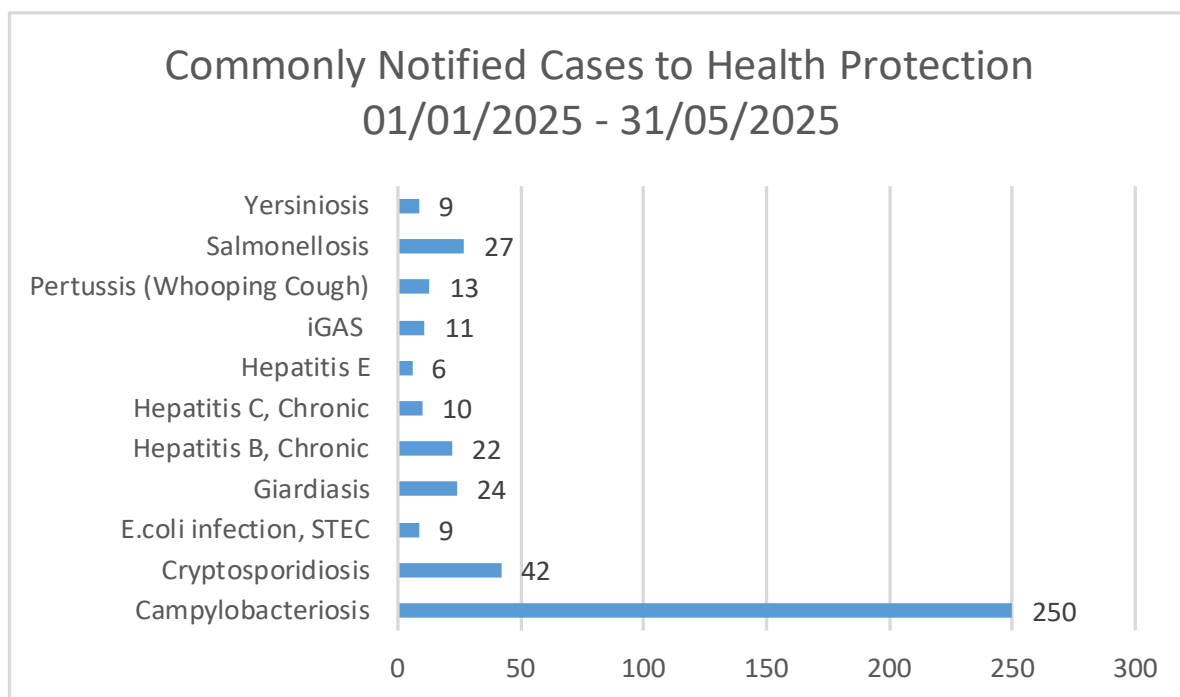
Measles

As people start heading off on holiday, it is worth noting that this year alone there have been almost 8000 cases and even some deaths in European countries. Over 6,000 cases have been reported in Romania but large numbers also in France, Spain, Italy and Germany although other European countries are also affected. Morocco is also reporting increased numbers. Measles is highly infectious, one of the Moroccan cases caused another 78 cases! MMR is the most effective way to protect us from Measles, Mumps and Rubella so before you head off, check that you and your family are not susceptible to infection.

Chickenpox

As always the team are hearing about large numbers of people affected with chickenpox. More recently we have seen cases among adults from tropical and subtropical climates where lower rates of childhood chickenpox are seen. Just a reminder, if you or your child have chickenpox, stay away from work, school, nursery until at least 5 days after your last crop of spots appeared and they are crusted over. You should also be feeling well. If you work in health or social care, it is important to know if you have had chickenpox in childhood or have been vaccinated. Managers should consider this when appointing new staff.

Surveillance Data



The Health Protection Team would like to express our special thanks to Andrea Carson Aberdeen City Council, Mark Nicholl Aberdeenshire Council, Karen Sievwright Moray Council, Marco Malagoli APHA, Penny Gillies NHS Grampian, Pauline Merchant NHS Grampian and their teams, for their contributions towards this newsletter.

You can contact the Health Protection Team at: NHS Grampian Health Protection Team.

Address: Summerfield House, 2 Eday Road, Aberdeen.

Phone: 01224 558520 Email: gram.healthprotection@nhs.scot