



**Measles**  
Don't let your child catch it

**The number of children catching measles is rising across the United Kingdom and Europe, including Northern Ireland.**

**To prevent this, children need to be immunised with MMR vaccine.**

Children under the age of 18 years who have missed their MMR vaccination should have the vaccine.



## Why is measles on the rise?

Lower levels of immunisation uptake across Europe including the UK over the past decade have led to a significant increase in the number of children and young people not protected against measles. The more people that are not protected, the more rapidly measles will spread. In Northern Ireland, a number of people have also recently had measles. People that are not immunised are not protected and at risk of infection.

## Is measles serious?

Measles is caused by a very infectious virus giving a rash and high fever. It can be very serious. A child with measles will have to spend about five days in bed and may be off school for ten days. Adults are likely to be ill for longer.

About one in every 15 children with measles will develop more serious complications. These can include ear and chest infections, fits, diarrhoea, encephalitis (infection of the brain), and brain damage. Measles can kill.



## Could my child die from measles?


Studies show that for every 1 in 2,500 to 1 in 5,000 individuals with measles, one is very likely to die.

## Is my child at risk?

Measles is one of the most infectious diseases known. A cough or a sneeze can spread the measles virus over a wide area. Because it's so infectious, the chances are your child will get measles if he or she is not protected.

The risk is greatest in children who have received no MMR vaccine.

Children who have only received one dose of MMR vaccine need a second dose of the vaccine to ensure they are protected.



Some children cannot have MMR because they are too young or they have illnesses such as leukaemia or other conditions that affect their immune system. They can only be protected if enough healthy children are vaccinated so measles is eliminated.

### What should I do, then?

The safest and most effective way to prevent measles is to ensure your child is fully vaccinated with MMR vaccine.

Your child should receive MMR vaccinations just after their first birthday, and again at three years and four months or soon after – best before starting school.

If your child has missed one of their routine MMR vaccinations, you can make an appointment with your GP to get it.

It is never too late to have your child vaccinated.

## I can't remember whether my child has had both MMR vaccinations.

Check your child's personal health record ('the Red Book'). This will tell you which vaccinations your child has had. If you are unsure, contact your GP surgery. If there is any doubt, it is better to have the MMR vaccination because additional doses pose no risk to your child's health if they've already had one or even two MMR vaccinations.

## I gave my child a single measles vaccination, can they still have MMR?

Yes. In these circumstances we recommend at least one dose of MMR and preferably two. MMR vaccine will also protect your child against mumps and rubella.

I'm still anxious about giving my child three vaccines in one injection.

We know that parents may be concerned about vaccination but children's immune systems cope very well.

Having MMR vaccine will not only protect your child against measles but also against mumps and rubella which can both have particularly serious consequences in young adults.



## Does the MMR vaccination have any side effects?

All vaccinations can cause mild side effects, such as soreness at the site of injection. The three viruses in MMR vaccine act at different times. They may produce the following side effects after the first dose:

- A week to ten days after the immunisation, about one in ten children may develop a mild fever and some develop a measles-like rash and go off their food. This can happen when the measles part of the vaccine starts to work, and is normal.
- About one in every 1000 immunised children may have a fit caused by a fever. This is called a 'febrile convulsion', and can be caused by any fever. However, if a child who has not been immunised gets measles, they are five times more likely to have a fit.
- Rarely, children may get mumps-like symptoms (fever and swollen glands) about three weeks after their immunisation as the mumps part of the vaccine starts to work.





- Very rarely, children may get a rash of small bruise-like spots in the two weeks after the vaccination. This is usually caused by the measles or rubella parts of the vaccine. If you see spots like these, take your child to the doctor to be checked. He or she will tell you how to deal with the rash.
- Fewer than one child in a million develops encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) after MMR vaccine, although there is very little evidence that it is caused by the vaccine. However, if a child catches measles, the chance of developing encephalitis is about one in 1000.

Your doctor or practice nurse will be able to discuss these issues in more detail.

## What about reactions after the second MMR?

The reactions listed above can occur, but they are ten times less likely to happen with the second dose.



## I've heard that MMR can cause autism

There is no credible evidence to support the link between MMR vaccine and autism. MMR vaccine has been used widely and safely around the world for more than 40 years. Over 500 million doses have been given in over 100 countries.

Numerous studies have failed to find any link between MMR and autism.

## My child is allergic to eggs – can they have MMR vaccine?

MMR vaccine can safely be given even to children who have had a severe allergy (anaphylactic reaction) to egg. If you have any concerns, talk to your practice nurse, health visitor or doctor.

MMR is the safest way to protect your child against measles and you'll be protecting them against mumps and rubella as well. You'll also be protecting children who can't have vaccinations for medical reasons.



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