

# Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR)



Making sure young people  
are protected

**You have been given a consent form for the MMR vaccine because you may not be fully immunised. You and your parents or carers should discuss the information in this leaflet before agreeing to have the vaccine.**

## **Why it's important that you are protected against measles, mumps and rubella**

It is important that all young people have had two doses of MMR to protect them against measles, mumps and rubella. It is never too late to be immunised.

Measles, mumps and rubella are highly infectious and can be dangerous illnesses. A cough or a sneeze can spread the viruses over a wide area. **The viruses spread easily in schools and other places where young people gather together.**



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## What are measles, mumps and rubella?

**Measles** is a very infectious virus that causes a fever, cough and rash. It can spread easily and cause serious complications, such as pneumonia and encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). It lasts for several days and, even if there are no serious complications, it is unpleasant.

**Mumps** causes fever and painful, swollen glands in the face and neck. Mumps is spread in the same way as measles and can cause a mild form of meningitis.

**Rubella** (German measles) causes a rash and fever, and is usually a very mild illness. If caught in pregnancy it can cause serious damage to an unborn child.

## How to protect yourself against measles, mumps and rubella

To be fully protected against measles, mumps and rubella you need **two separate doses** of the MMR vaccine.

You should have received two doses of the MMR vaccine, the first dose between 12 and 13 months and another before starting school. If you didn't have both doses, you may still be at risk.

You're receiving this leaflet because our records show that you haven't had two doses of the MMR vaccine. If this is your first dose, a second dose will increase protection and should be given a month after the first dose. The nurse will advise you on how to arrange this.

## How is the MMR vaccine given?

The vaccine is injected into the muscle of the upper arm.

## What is the MMR vaccine and is it effective?

The MMR vaccine contains weakened versions of live measles, mumps and rubella viruses. Because the viruses are weakened, people who have recently had the vaccine cannot infect others.

The MMR vaccine is highly effective. It has been responsible for protecting Scottish children and young people from these three diseases since it was introduced in 1988. It does not contain thiomersal (mercury).

## Are there any reasons I shouldn't have the MMR vaccine?

Before getting the MMR vaccine, young people who:

- are immunosuppressed because they are having treatment for a serious condition, such as a transplant or cancer
- have a condition that affects their immune system, such as severe primary immunodeficiency
- are pregnant

should talk to their GP or nurse.

There are no other medical reasons why these vaccines should not be given. If you are worried, talk to the nurse your GP. Individuals with a confirmed history of egg allergy can receive the MMR vaccine.

Pork gelatine is a common and essential ingredient in many medicines, including one of the MMR vaccines currently used in Scotland. If you have any concerns about this, please speak to your school nurse team as there are alternative MMR vaccines available which do not contain pork gelatine.

Many faith groups, including Muslim and Jewish communities, have approved the use of gelatine-containing vaccines. It is, however, an individual choice whether or not to receive this and we recognise that opinions will differ between communities.

## Are there any side effects with MMR vaccines?

A few people experience mild side effects from the MMR vaccine. Side effects of MMR may be:

- mild rash (this rash is not infectious) or fever that develops a week or two after the vaccine and lasts one to three days
- swollen lymph glands that develop two to three weeks later
- sore or stiff joints that last a couple of days to a few weeks.

These side effects will pass in a short time.

Only on very rare occasions can MMR cause serious side effects, and the numbers are small compared to the side effects caused by the real diseases. In rare cases, a small rash of bruise-like spots may develop about two weeks after having the MMR vaccine. This is linked to the rubella vaccine and is known as idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura (ITP). It's estimated that ITP develops in one in 24,000 doses of the MMR vaccine. There is a greater risk of developing ITP from measles or rubella infection than from having the vaccine. ITP usually gets better without treatment but, as with any rash, you should seek advice from your GP as soon as possible.

If you want more advice on immunisation, speak to your doctor, practice nurse or school nurse, or call the NHS inform helpline on **0800 22 44 88** (text phone **18001 0800 22 44 88**; the helpline also provides an interpreting service).

This information is also available at:  
**[www.immunisationscotland.org.uk](http://www.immunisationscotland.org.uk)**