

MMR Vaccine (Measles, Mumps and Rubella): What you need to know

1. Why get vaccinated?

Measles, mumps, and rubella are serious diseases. Before vaccines they were very common, especially among children.

Measles

- Measles virus causes rash, cough, runny nose, eye irritation, and fever.
- It can lead to ear infection, pneumonia, seizures, brain damage, and death.

Mumps

- Mumps virus causes fever, headache, muscle pain, loss of appetite, and swollen glands.
- It can lead to deafness, meningitis, painful swelling of the testicles or ovaries, and rarely sterility.

Rubella (German Measles)

- Rubella virus causes rash, arthritis (mostly in women), and mild fever.
- If a woman gets rubella while she is pregnant, she could have a miscarriage or her baby could be born with serious birth defects.

These diseases spread from person to person through the air. You can easily catch them by being around someone who is already infected.

Measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine can protect children (and adults) from all three of these diseases.

2. Who should get MMR vaccine and when?

Children should get 2 doses of MMR vaccine:

- **First Dose:** 12–15 months of age
- **Second Dose:** 4–6 years of age (may be given earlier, if at least 28 days after the 1st dose)

Some infants younger than 12 months should get a dose of MMR if they are traveling out of the country.

Children between 1 and 12 years of age can get a “combination” vaccine called MMRV, which contains both MMR and varicella (chickenpox) vaccines.

3. Some people should not get MMR vaccine or should wait.

- Anyone who has ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction to the antibiotic neomycin, or any other component of MMR vaccine, should not get the vaccine.

- Anyone who had a life-threatening allergic reaction to a previous dose should not get another dose.
- Some people who are sick at the time the shot is scheduled may be advised to wait until they recover before getting MMR vaccine.
- Pregnant women should not get MMR vaccine. Pregnant women who need the vaccine should wait until after giving birth. Women should avoid getting pregnant for 4 weeks after vaccination with MMR vaccine.
- Tell your doctor if the person getting the vaccine:
 - Has HIV/AIDS, or another disease that affects the immune system
 - Is being treated with drugs that affect the immune system, such as steroids
 - Has any kind of cancer
 - Is being treated for cancer with radiation or drugs
 - Has ever had a low platelet count
 - Has gotten another vaccine within the past 4 weeks
 - Has recently had a transfusion or received other blood products

4. What are the risks from MMR vaccine?

A vaccine, like any medicine, is capable of causing serious problems, such as severe allergic reactions.

The risk of MMR vaccine causing serious harm, or death, is extremely small.

Getting MMR vaccine is much safer than getting measles, mumps or rubella.

Most people who get MMR vaccine do not have any serious problems with it.

Mild problems

- Fever
- Mild rash
- Swelling of glands in the cheeks or neck

If these problems occur, it is usually within 6-14 days after the shot. They occur less often after the second dose.

Moderate problems

- Seizure caused by fever
- Temporary pain and stiffness in the joints, mostly in teenage or adult women
- Temporary low platelet count, which can cause a bleeding disorder

Severe problems (very rare)

- Serious allergic reaction
- Several other severe problems have been reported after a child gets MMR vaccine, including:
 - Deafness

- Long-term seizures, coma, or lowered consciousness
- Permanent brain damage

5. What if there is a serious reaction?

What should I look for?

- Look for anything that concerns you, such as signs of a severe allergic reaction, very high fever, or behavior changes.

Signs of a severe allergic reaction can include hives, swelling of the face and throat, difficulty breathing, a fast heartbeat, dizziness, and weakness. These would start a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination.