

## **Questions about the MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella) vaccine**

### **Does the MMR vaccine give safe and effective protection?**

Yes, the MMR vaccine is the safest way that parents can protect their children against three serious diseases. Measles, mumps and rubella spread very easily and can lead to serious problems including meningitis, hearing loss and problems during pregnancy. Vaccines teach your immune system how to create antibodies that protect you from diseases. It's much safer for your immune system to learn this through vaccination than by catching each disease and treating them. Once your immune system knows how to fight a disease, it can often give you life-long protection.

Lots of research over many years has proved that the vaccine is safe and effective. In the 1990s, a small research study came out saying there could be a link between the MMR vaccine and a neurodevelopmental disorder called autism. This was shown to be false with made up data and the researcher was found guilty of professional misconduct and removed from the medical register. The National Autistic Society in the UK has also confirmed that there is no link between autism and the MMR vaccine.

### **Can my child have multiple vaccines at once?**

Yes, there are no harmful effects from having vaccines that give protection from more than one virus at once for children or adults, like the MMR vaccine. This is routine and safe and millions of children around the world have combined vaccines every year.

The immune system is good at learning how to make antibodies from several viruses at once. From the moment they are born children are exposed to the huge numbers of bacteria and viruses in the world around them and their immune systems become stronger and stronger. Getting your child the MMR vaccine as soon as you can gives them the best protection.

Combined injections also mean children need fewer injections, meaning less discomfort, avoiding getting ill whilst waiting for different injections, and needing fewer appointments.

Single vaccines for measles, mumps and rubella are not recommended and are not available on the NHS. Some private clinics in the UK offer single vaccines against measles, mumps and rubella, but these vaccines are unlicensed. This means there are no checks on their safety and effectiveness. The NHS does not keep a list of private clinics.

### **Do children need the MMR vaccine if they have had single vaccines of Measles, Mumps and Rubella before?**

Yes, it is recommended for all children and adults to get the two injections of the combined MMR vaccine.

Single vaccines of Measles, Mumps and Rubella sold in private clinics may not be checked for safety and effectiveness and may not be strong enough to give full protection.

There is no health risk from having extra doses, if you have the MMR vaccine after having a single dose vaccine before.

### **Is measles common in the UK?**

Yes measles is becoming more common in the UK and we have had an outbreak (a sudden rise in cases) in the Midlands (as of March 2024). Measles is one of the most highly infectious diseases. Measles can be spread after only 15 minutes in direct contact with someone who is infected. It is spread through coughing and sneezing, close personal contact or by touching things that people have coughed or sneezed on.

Measles can be serious, especially for young children, pregnant women and people with weak immune systems. The best way to prevent measles is through getting vaccinated.

### **What are mumps and rubella and are they serious?**

#### **Mumps**

Mumps is most recognisable by the painful swellings in the side of the face under the ears, giving a person with mumps a distinctive "hamster face" appearance.

Other symptoms of mumps include headaches, joint pain, and a high temperature, which may develop a few days before the swelling of the parotid glands.

It's important to contact a GP if you suspect mumps so a diagnosis can be made.

While mumps is not usually serious, the condition has similar symptoms to more serious types of infection, such as glandular fever and tonsillitis.

Your GP can usually make a diagnosis after seeing and feeling the swelling, looking at the position of the tonsils in the mouth and checking the person's temperature to see if it's higher than normal.

Let your GP know in advance if you're coming to the surgery so they can take any necessary precautions to prevent the spread of infection.

Mumps can cause viral meningitis, a very unpleasant condition.

Painful complications of mumps can include inflammation of the ovaries or testicles, and in rarer cases, the pancreas.

#### **Rubella**

Rubella (German measles) is a viral infection that's now rare in the UK. It's usually a mild condition that gets better without treatment in 7 to 10 days.

Symptoms of rubella include:

- a red-pink skin rash made up of small spots
- swollen glands around the head and neck
- a high temperature (fever)

- cold-like symptoms such as a cough and runny nose
- aching and painful joints – more common in adults

The symptoms of rubella usually only last a few days, but your glands may be swollen for several weeks

Rubella is more serious for pregnant women. It can cause:

- loss of the baby (miscarriage)
- serious problems after the baby is born – such as problems with their sight, hearing, heart, or brain

The risk is highest if you get rubella early in pregnancy.

There's not thought to be a risk to your baby if you get rubella after week 20 of your pregnancy

### **Where can I find more information?**

To get advice from the Friends, Families and Travellers advice line, call [01273 234 777](tel:01273234777).

To book your MMR vaccine, contact your GP, nurse or health visitor.

You can also find more information about the MMR vaccine online:

Book your measles, mumps and rubella vaccines: [NHS England » Book your measles, mumps and rubella vaccines – easy read](#)

Measles information: [Measles - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

MMR information: [MMR \(measles, mumps and rubella\) vaccine - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#)

Information about combined MMR vaccination: [Measles, mumps, rubella \(MMR\): use of combined vaccine instead of single vaccines - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Mumps information: [Mumps - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](http://www.nhs.uk)

Rubella information: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/rubella/>

Vaccine knowledge project: [Home | Vaccine Knowledge Project \(ox.ac.uk\)](#)

Joined Up Care Derbyshire: (includes information about urgent treatment centres) [Joined Up Care Derbyshire Integrated Care System](#)

[Urgent Treatment Centres » Joined Up Care Derbyshire](#)