

Measles Mumps and Rubella Vaccine

Having the MMR vaccine after having a baby

Information for parents





Why am I being offered the MMR vaccine?

Rubella can be serious for pregnant women due to the risks to the unborn baby. For this reason all pregnant women are offered a blood test to check if they are immune against rubella.

If your blood test shows that you are not immune then you may be at risk of catching rubella. This will be the case if you have not had rubella in the past or do not have immunity from previous vaccination.

Giving live vaccines in pregnancy is not generally recommended. The measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine will therefore be offered to you immediately after your baby is born. This will protect you against rubella in your future pregnancies as well as measles and mumps.

If your blood test shows that you are not immune to rubella, we recommend that you:

- **Receive TWO doses of the MMR vaccine.**
- **Have the first dose soon after your baby is born.**
- **Have the second dose at least 4 weeks later.**

It is important that you receive TWO doses of MMR before you become pregnant again.

If you are protected against these infections then you cannot pass them onto your unborn child or other family and friends in future.

What is the MMR vaccine?

The MMR vaccine contains weakened measles, mumps and rubella viruses. The vaccine is very safe and will protect you against all three diseases.

What does MMR protect against?

The MMR vaccine protects against three highly infectious viral diseases that can cause serious illness and complications. It is important to make sure everyone is fully protected.

Rubella (German measles): is usually a mild illness and many people have no symptoms. In others it causes a short-lived rash, swollen glands and a sore throat.

Rubella can be **very serious in pregnancy** as the unborn baby can be infected. It can seriously damage the baby's sight, hearing, heart or brain. This condition is called congenital rubella syndrome (CRS). In the first 16 weeks of pregnancy rubella causes CRS in up to nine out of 10 cases. In many cases pregnant women catch rubella from children. This is why all children are offered MMR vaccination at one year of age and just before starting school.

Measles: can cause serious illness particularly in young infants and older adults. Measles can affect people of all ages and it is not possible to tell who will become seriously ill. Symptoms include a high fever and rash. Complications include chest infections, fits and encephalitis (swelling of the brain). It can also cause miscarriage and serious illness in pregnancy. In very serious cases, measles can cause death.

Mumps: can cause fever, headaches and painful, swollen glands in the face, neck and jaw. Serious complications include deafness, viral meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain) and encephalitis (swelling of the brain). It can also cause painful swelling of the testicles in males and of the ovaries in females.

Frequently asked Questions

How many vaccinations do I need?

Two doses of the MMR vaccine given at least four weeks apart are needed. This will provide full protection.

How and when is the vaccine given?

The MMR vaccine is given by injection into the upper arm. It will usually be given to you before you leave hospital. For convenience, the second dose can be given by your GP to fit in with your six week check appointment. Your midwife will give you a letter to take to your GP. It is important to have two doses of MMR to be fully protected.

What are the side effects?

MMR is made from viruses that are similar to those which cause the natural diseases but have been weakened. It may cause a mild form of the diseases that it protects against, but these cannot be passed on to others or cause infection.

How effective is the MMR vaccine?

Two doses of the MMR vaccine are highly effective, providing over 99% protection against measles and rubella.

Can I just have the rubella vaccine?

Single rubella vaccine is no longer available in the UK. MMR vaccine is recognised as the best available vaccination against rubella. It is very safe and has been used across the world for over 35 years.

Having the MMR vaccine will not cause you any harm even if you have had natural measles, mumps or rubella infections or single vaccines previously. MMR will ensure you are protected against all three infections.

Will the MMR vaccine affect my future pregnancies?

MMR will not affect your future pregnancies.

We advise that once you have had the MMR vaccine, you should ideally not become pregnant for at least four weeks.

There is substantial evidence that the rubella part of the vaccine does not harm the unborn baby. If you should become pregnant within four weeks of having the vaccine, there is no reason to expect any problems for either you or your baby but please tell your doctor or midwife.

I am not planning to have any more babies so why do I need the vaccine?

Measles and mumps can be serious illnesses outside of pregnancy. Being protected against rubella will also stop you from spreading rubella to other pregnant women, for whom the infection could be very serious.

Does having the vaccine affect breastfeeding?

No. MMR vaccine in a breastfeeding mother will do no harm to her or her baby.

Does the MMR vaccine cause autism?

There is now an overwhelming amount of scientific evidence that there is NO link between MMR and autism.

How can I find out more information?

Please discuss this with your GP or midwife at your next appointment.

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For further information please go to:

**www.nhs.uk or
www.hpa.org.uk**

Based on leaflets previously produced by the Mayday University Hospital and St George's Healthcare NHS Trust. Prepared by Emma Dapaah, Health Protection Nurse Specialist, with colleagues from the London immunisation leads network on behalf of the London Health Protection Units. Updated: August 2014.



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