



UK Health  
Security  
Agency

**NHS**

think  
**measles**

It's not just a kids'  
problem



**i**mmunisation

Helping to protect everyone, at every age

**This leaflet explains about the measles, mumps and rubella vaccination which helps protect against the 3 diseases.**

People who have not been vaccinated with 2 doses of MMR vaccine are more likely to catch these diseases. Children do become ill when they catch them, but so do adults. All 3 diseases can be very serious. They can make adults very ill and cause problems for women who are pregnant and people who have weakened immune systems (and can't fight infection well).

**Measles is a serious illness that is highly infectious. To be protected from measles and other infections including mumps and rubella, you need to be immunised with 2 doses of MMR vaccine.**

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## What is measles?

Measles is caused by a very infectious virus causing a rash and high fever and can be very serious. The illness can be more severe in adults and can last for longer. Someone with measles usually has to spend about 5 days in bed and may be off school or work for 10 days. Adults are also at higher risk of complications.



Complications of measles can include ear and chest infections, fits, diarrhoea, encephalitis (infection of the brain), and brain damage. About one in 5,000 individuals with measles is likely to die. There have been 3 deaths from measles in England since 2006.

Measles is highly infectious – a cough or a sneeze can spread the measles virus over a wide area. If you come into contact with it and are not protected, the chances are that you will be infected.

If you think you have measles, call your GP or walk in centre before you visit. This is important - if you spend time with someone who has a weak immune system they can easily catch it and become seriously ill. So if you have symptoms of measles, call ahead and get advice.

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## What is mumps?

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.

- if you have missed your MMR there's a good chance that you may catch mumps if you come into contact with someone with the disease. You need 2 doses of MMR to be fully immunised
- the only effective way to prevent mumps is to have 2 MMR vaccinations

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## What is 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. Rubella is more serious for pregnant women.

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.

For more information visit [www.nhs.uk/measles](http://www.nhs.uk/measles) or you can phone NHS on 111.

You are at greatest risk if you have not been immunised with 2 doses of MMR vaccine.

If you can't remember if you've had both MMR vaccinations, it's better to book an appointment to have MMR vaccine because extra doses pose no health risk. If you need 2 doses, they should ideally be given 3 months apart.

If you have missed one or both of your MMR vaccinations contact your GP surgery to arrange an appointment.

By getting immunised you will not only be protecting yourself but also those people, especially children, who cannot have MMR because they have illnesses such as leukaemia. They are protected if enough of the population is vaccinated so measles is eliminated.

## **Are there any side effects?**

Some people develop mild side effects such as a sore arm or mild rash or swollen glands after vaccination. More serious side effects are rare but occasionally a rash may develop up to 6 weeks after vaccination. If you are worried speak to your practice nurse or GP.

If you are having treatment for a serious condition such as a transplant or cancer, or you have a condition that affects your immune system such as HIV get advice from your nurse or doctor.

## **In the UK we have 2 MMR vaccines**

Both of the vaccines work very well, one contains porcine gelatine and the other doesn't. If you want to have or you want your child to have the porcine gelatine free vaccine, talk to your practice nurse or GP.

## **Remember, measles – it's not just a kids problem**

If you care for individuals with a weakened immune system or young children as part of your work, it's particularly important that you are fully immunised with MMR. Passing on measles to children who are too young to have MMR vaccine or to someone who is already ill, can have very serious consequences for their health. As a precaution, women should avoid getting pregnant for one month after MMR vaccination.

**It's never too late to have your MMR vaccination**

UK Health Security Agency **NHS**

If you think you've got  
**measles**  
call ahead

Have you got a rash and do you feel very unwell – don't go to the surgery, walk in centre or your local accident and emergency department – **Call ahead**, that way if you do have measles – you won't pass it on to others – it can be a fatal disease if someone has a weak immune system and can't fight it off – if a pregnant woman catches measles – it can harm her baby.

**Measles is serious, call ahead and get advice.**

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Teenagers, young adults and anyone who has missed their MMR vaccination can get measles. Symptoms such as:

- high fever
- rash – sometimes starting around the ears
- sore red eyes
- cough
- aching and feeling unwell

**Remember, if it could be measles – they need to be in an area where they cannot pass the infection to vulnerable patients such as the immunocompromised and pregnant women.**

For more information go to  
[www.nhs.uk/vaccinations](http://www.nhs.uk/vaccinations)

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3205760 2p 50K Dec 2017 (APS)  
First published May 2016

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