

Measles and the MMR vaccine; Frequently Asked Questions

What is measles?

Measles is a highly infectious virus. Symptoms of measles may include:

- Cold-like symptoms, such as a runny nose, sneezing and a cough Watery eyes, swollen eyelids and red eyes that may be sensitive to light
- A high temperature (fever), which may reach around 40°C (104°F)
- Small greyish-white spots in the mouth
- Tiredness, aches and pains, irritability and a general lack of energy

A measles rash appears around 2 to 4 days after initial symptoms and normally fades after about a week.

Measles is passed to others in the droplets of coughs or sneezes and easily infects families and communities if children and adults are unvaccinated.

People with measles are infectious from when the symptoms develop until about 4 days after the rash first appears.

Who's most at risk?

Complications of measles are more likely to develop in certain groups of people. These include:

- Babies younger than 1 year old
- Children with a poor diet
- Children with a weakened immune system (such as those with leukaemia)
- Teenagers and adults

If you're not immune to measles and become infected while you're pregnant, there can be a risk to the baby

Is Measles Serious?

Measles can lead to serious complications such as liver infection (hepatitis), squints in the eyes, infection of the membranes surrounding the brain and spinal cord (meningitis) or infection of the brain itself (encephalitis).

More common complications of measles include:

- Diarrhoea and vomiting, which can lead to dehydration
- Middle ear infection (otitis media), which can cause earache

- Eye infection (conjunctivitis)
- Inflammation of the voice box (laryngitis)
- Infections of the airways and lungs (such as pneumonia, bronchitis and croup)
- Fits caused by a fever (febrile seizures)

How can I protect myself and my children?

The MMR vaccine is safe and effective. You can protect yourself and your family by having the MMR vaccine. MMR vaccine is **FREE** on the NHS.

Why do I need 2 doses of MMR?

MMR vaccination requires two doses as one dose only protects 90 out of 100 people. That's why a second dose is needed. The second dose boosts protection to almost 100 out of 100 people. One dose is normally given within one month of a child's first birthday, the other when they are 3 year and 4 months (with the pre-school booster).

However, if you, or your child, have not previously had 2 doses of MMR vaccination, please contact your GP Practice to arrange vaccination as soon as possible.

I am unsure if I have had 2 MMR vaccinations

If you are unsure whether you or child has had 2 MMR vaccinations, please contact your GP practice to check your vaccination history and they will be able to recommend MMR vaccination for you or your child if needed.

What if I or my children have already has measles?

If you or your child has already had measles you will need the MMR vaccination as it provides protection from future mumps and rubella infections.

When to see your GP or healthcare provider

You should contact your GP or healthcare provider as soon as possible if you suspect that you or your child may have measles.

It's best to phone before your visit as your GP surgery healthcare provider may need to make arrangements to reduce the risk of spreading the infection to others.

If you're pregnant and think you have come into contact with someone with measles and you know you're not immune, you should see your GP as soon as possible.

Further information can be found

About measles: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles/>

About the MMR vaccine: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/mmr-questions-answers/>