



Think Measles

Information about measles
and the MMR vaccine



What is measles?

Measles is a highly infectious disease that can cause serious complications, particularly in children under the age of 12 months, pregnant women, and those whose immune system does not work well.

What is the concern about measles in 2024?



There have been a lot of cases of measles reported in Europe. There are outbreaks of measles in England, Romania and other countries. Measles is very infectious and there is concern that measles will spread to other countries including Ireland.

What are the symptoms of measles?

Measles infection can cause a high fever, conjunctivitis, rhinitis and a cough before the measles rash develops from behind the ears and spreads all over the trunk and limbs over 3 to 4 days. Symptoms improve from 2 days after the rash develops unless there are complications.

What are the complications of measles?



1 in 3 people who have measles develop complications. Young children under 5 years are most likely to develop complications. Complications include:

- **Ear infections.** 1 in 10 people with measles will get this.
- **Pneumonia.** 1 in 20 people with measles will suffer a serious side effect such as pneumonia.
- **Convulsions.** 1 in 200 people with measles will get this.
- **Inflammation of the brain (encephalitis).** 1 in 1,000 people with measles will get this.

1 out of 1,000 people who get measles will unfortunately die, even with the best care. Measles can also rarely cause a fatal chronic brain inflammation called subacute sclerosing panencephalitis.

What is the name of the MMR vaccine?

The name of the MMR vaccine is either Priorix or MMRVaxPro.

What diseases does the MMR vaccine protect against?



The MMR vaccine protects you or your child against measles, as well as mumps and rubella (also called German measles).

Measles, mumps and rubella are caused by viruses and are highly infectious diseases. They are spread when the virus is passed from somebody who has the disease to somebody who has no protection against it.

Disease	Common Symptoms	Possible Complications
Measles	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Fever➤ Rash➤ Red and painful eyes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Encephalitis (swelling of the brain)➤ Pneumonia➤ Bronchitis➤ Ear infections
Mumps	Painful swollen glands under the jaw and fever	<ul style="list-style-type: none">➤ Meningitis➤ Deafness➤ Swollen, painful testicles in adult males
Rubella (German measles)	Fever and a rash	If a pregnant woman gets rubella, her baby may suffer from major birth defects including blindness, brain damage, deafness, heart problems and other serious complications



When is MMR vaccine usually given?

In Ireland, children are given their first MMR vaccine at 12 months of age. Children get a second dose when they are 4-5 years of age usually in junior infants. In Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal, the second dose is given by the GP when children are aged 4-5 years.



Two doses of MMR vaccine give the best protection.

What if my child or I have missed the MMR vaccine

You can get the MMR vaccine doses that you have missed. The vaccine is available from your GP.

GPs are offering the MMR to children and adults who never received the MMR vaccine at the recommended ages of 12 months with a second dose given in junior infants. GPs may administer both doses for the MMR catch up vaccination.

HSE vaccination clinics are offering the MMR vaccine to children from the age of 5 years and to adults.

Is there anyone who doesn't need MMR vaccine?

If you were born in Ireland before 1978 you are likely to have had measles infection and you don't need the vaccine.

Does anyone need a 3rd MMR vaccine?

No. Two doses provide 99% protection against measles.

Is there anyone who should not get the MMR vaccine?



There are very few people who should not get the MMR vaccine. You should not get the vaccine if:

- You are pregnant.
- You have had a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to a previous MMR vaccine.
- You have had a severe allergic reaction to any part of the vaccine or to neomycin or gelatin which are contained in the MMR vaccine.
- Babies under 12 months should not receive the MMR vaccine if their mother was taking a medicine called infliximab throughout the pregnancy.
- Babies who are being breastfed by mothers taking infliximab should not receive the MMR vaccine.

Delay getting the MMR vaccine if you:

- Are ill with a high fever.
- Are on a high dose of medicines called corticosteroids.
- Are having treatment such as chemotherapy or radiotherapy.
- Have an illness or disease that affects your immune system.

Your doctor or nurse can advise you if you need to delay getting vaccinated.

Is there a link between the MMR vaccine and autism?

No. Research has shown that there is no link between the MMR vaccine and autism.

Does the MMR vaccine have any side-effects?

Most people have no problem after this vaccine. Side effects are much less common after a 2nd dose of the MMR vaccine. Some people get an area of soreness, swelling and redness where the injection was given. Rarely people may get “mini measles” with a rash and fever 6 to 10 days later. People may get “mini-mumps” with swelling in the jaw area in the third week after vaccination. These are not contagious and pass after a few days.

You or your child can take paracetamol or ibuprofen to relieve aches and pains or to lower fever.



You should delay getting pregnant for **1 month** after getting the MMR vaccine

More Information

If you have any questions or queries:

- Further information about the MMR vaccination is available at www.immunisation.ie
- Visit www.hpsc.ie for information about the infectious diseases.
- You can also find links to the patient information leaflets for the vaccines at www.hpra.ie. Search for Priorix or MMRVaxPro (MMR) to read the relevant patient information leaflet.
- You can also talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions.
- Visit HSE website for more information about the signs and symptoms, treatment and risks of measles www2.hse.ie/conditions/measles