

MMR Information Sheet

Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR) vaccine

What is the MMR vaccine

MMR is a vaccine used to help prevent Measles, Mumps and Rubella infection. The vaccine names are MMR II and Priorix.

Measles is a highly contagious virus. It is transmitted via respiratory secretions.

Symptoms include fever, malaise, cough, rhinitis and conjunctivitis (inflammation of the conjunctiva of the eye). A (maculopapular) rash then begins on the face and neck and spreads to the torso and limbs. Up to a third of people who get measles will experience a complication.

Mumps is an acute viral illness affecting the salivary glands. It is transmitted via respiratory secretions. Symptoms include fever, headache, malaise, myalgia and anorexia.

Rubella or German Measles is a virus caused by the rubella virus (not the same virus that causes measles). It is transmitted through respiratory secretions. Rubella is usually a self-limiting infection with symptoms that include fever, swollen and tender lymph nodes, a rash, headache, loss of appetite and mild conjunctivitis (inflammation of the eyelids/eyeballs).

What is the vaccine and how does it work?

The vaccine contains weakened live attenuated vaccine virus and is injected into the body. The body then produces its own protection by making disease-fighting substances (antibodies) to fight the virus. The vaccine itself does not usually cause disease. If a vaccinated person comes into contact with live virus the body is usually ready and produces antibodies to destroy it. However, as with all vaccines, 100% protection against measles, mumps and rubella cannot be guaranteed. It may take up to 4-6 weeks for maximum protection to develop.

Dosage and how it is given

The dose of MMR vaccine for adults is 0.5 mL, and it is usually injected just under the skin (subcutaneously) of the upper arm. All persons born during or since 1966 should have documented evidence of 2 doses of MMR-containing vaccine (administered at least 4 weeks apart). No vaccination is required for persons born before 1966 (unless serological evidence indicates otherwise), as circulating virus and disease were prevalent before this time, suggesting most persons would have acquired immunity from natural infection. MMR may be given at the same time as other vaccines.

Before you are given MMR

Anyone who has ever had a severe (life threatening) allergic reaction to a previous dose of an MMR vaccine or to the vaccine ingredients should not get another dose. MMR vaccine components include:

- The active ingredients of MMR are weakened strains of measles, mumps and rubella (German measles) viruses.
- inactive ingredients include neomycin, sorbitol, hydrolysed gelatin, sodium phosphate, sucrose, sodium chloride, recombinant human albumin, foetal bovine serum, other buffer and media ingredients.

What are the side effects of the vaccine

A vaccine, like any medicine, could possibly cause serious problems, such as severe allergic reactions. The risk of MMR causing serious harm is extremely low. Getting the MMR vaccine is much safer than getting the diseases. Adverse events following administration of MMR are generally mild and well tolerated. Adverse events are much less common after the 2nd dose of MMR than after the 1st dose.

Fever (with malaise and/or a rash, which is non-infectious) may occur after MMR vaccination, most commonly between 7 to 10 days (range 5 to 12 days) after vaccination and lasting about 2 to 3 days. High fever (>39.4°C) occurs in approximately 5 to 15% of MMR vaccine recipients, and rash occurs in approximately 5%.

As with all vaccines given by injection, there is a very small risk of a serious allergic reaction. Tell your doctor immediately or go to accident and emergency if you notice any of the following: wheezing or shortness of breath, swelling of the face, lips, mouth, throat or neck which may cause difficulty in swallowing or breathing, swelling of the hands, feet, or ankles, pinkish, itchy swellings on the skin, also called hives or nettle rash, skin rash, itchiness. If you have these, you may have had a serious allergic reaction to MMR. You may need urgent medical attention or hospitalisation. Most of these side effects occur within 15-30 minutes of vaccination.

If you feel anything that concerns you after your vaccination, contact your GP or Health Direct on 1800 022 222.

Use of MMR in pregnancy

MMR is contraindicated in pregnant women. Pregnancy should be avoided for 28 days after vaccination. MMR can be given to breastfeeding women.

After you have had your first dose of MMR, don't forget to follow-up with your second dose 4 weeks later to ensure you have protective immunity to Measles, Mumps and Rubella.

Post Vaccination Waiting Period

As per medical protocols, as a precaution, you will be asked to wait in the supervised vicinity of the immunisation clinic for 15 minutes after your vaccination.

If you have any other questions, you can discuss these with your nurse on the day of vaccination or contact Work Health Professionals on (08) 9204 1999.