

Measles, mumps and rubella

Immunisation information

OFFICIAL

The National Immunisation Program schedule provides free measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine to children at 12 months and 18 months of age.

Measles

Measles is a serious and highly contagious viral disease which causes fever, runny nose, cough and sore red eyes, followed by a rash. Measles can sometimes lead to dangerous complications such as pneumonia and encephalitis.

About 1 in every 1,000 people who contracts measles will develop encephalitis (brain inflammation). For every 10 children who develop measles encephalitis, 1 will die and many will have permanent brain damage.

A rare condition called subacute sclerosing panencephalitis (SSPE, brain degeneration) can develop several years after a measles infection. SSPE rapidly destroys the brain and is always fatal.

Measles can be caught through coughs and sneezes from an infected person before that person realises they are sick.

Mumps

Mumps causes fever, headache and inflammation of the salivary glands. About 1 in 5,000 children develops encephalitis. The disease can cause infertility and permanent deafness.

About 1 in 5 adolescent or adult males who contracts mumps develops a painful inflammation and swelling of the testicles. Males with this condition generally recover completely, but on rare occasions it may cause infertility.

Mumps can be caught through coughs and sneezes from an infected person before that person realises they are sick.

Rubella

This is a mild childhood disease but it can also affect teenagers and adults. The disease causes swollen glands, joint pains and a rash on the face and neck which lasts 2 to 3 days. Recovery is always speedy and complete.

Rubella is most dangerous when a woman catches it in the first 20 weeks of pregnancy. This can result in serious abnormalities in the newborn baby. Deafness, blindness, heart defects and intellectual disabilities can occur.

Rubella can be caught through coughs and sneezes from an infected person before that person realises they are sick.

Rubella is highly contagious and the best way to protect expectant mothers and their babies is to ensure that women are immunised before they become pregnant.

*Pregnancy should be avoided for one month following immunisation.

Measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccines

The MMR vaccine also comes in combination with chickenpox (MMRV) for 18-month-old children and contains small amounts of each of the viruses at a reduced strength and a small amount of the antibiotic neomycin.

Possible side effects of MMR vaccine

Reactions to MMR vaccine are much less frequent than the complications of the diseases.

Common side effects

Seen 7 to 10 days after vaccination:

- high fever over 39 °C
- faint red rash (not infectious)
- head cold and/or runny nose
- cough and/or puffy eyes
- drowsiness or tiredness
- swelling of the salivary glands
- a temporary small lump at the injection site.

Uncommon side effects

- Fever causing seizure (febrile convulsions)
- Temporary pain and stiffness in the joints
- Temporary low platelet count, causing bleeding or bruising.

Extremely rare side effects

A severe allergic reaction.

If mild reactions do occur, they may last 2 to 3 days. The side effects can be reduced by:

- placing a cold wet cloth on the sore injection site
- giving extra fluids and not overdressing if the person has a fever
- taking (or giving your child) paracetamol to reduce discomfort (note the recommended dose for the age of your child).

If reactions are severe or persistent, or if you are worried, contact your doctor or hospital.

You may also call the Victorian vaccine safety service on 1300 882 924 option 1.

Pre-immunisation checklist

Before you or your child is immunised, tell the doctor or nurse if any of the following apply:

- ☐ Has had a vaccine containing live viruses within the last month (such as MMR, chickenpox or BCG)
- ☐ Is unwell on the day of immunisation (temperature over 38.5 °C)
- ☐ Has had a severe reaction to a previous MMR vaccine
- ☐ Has had a severe allergy to any vaccine component for example, neomycin
- ☐ Is taking steroids of any sort other than inhaled asthma sprays or steroid creams (for example, cortisone or prednisone)
- ☐ Has had immunoglobulin or a blood product in the past year
- ☐ Has a disease or is having treatment which causes low immunity (for example, leukaemia, cancer, HIV/AIDS, radiotherapy or chemotherapy)
- ☐ Is pregnant or planning to become pregnant within one month of immunisation.

Further information

- www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au
- www.immunise.health.gov.au
- Translating and interpreting service, call 131 450

To receive this document in another format, [email the Immunisation Unit](mailto:immunisation@health.vic.gov.au) <immunisation@health.vic.gov.au>.

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