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Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR)

MMR vaccine is offered as part of the UK childhood immunisation schedule. It helps to protect your child from measles, mumps and rubella (German measles).

The vaccine will be injected into your child's thigh (younger children) or upper arm (older children).

The most common side-effects are tenderness at the site of the injection, and a raised temperature (mild fever). These should soon pass.

About measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine

Type of medicine	Measles, mumps and rubella vaccine
Used for	Immunisation against measles, mumps and rubella
Also called	MMRvaxPro®; Priorix®
Available as	Intramuscular injection

MMR stands for [measles](#), [mumps](#) and [rubella \(German measles\)](#). These are three different diseases which are caused by three different viruses. The vaccines given to [immunise against measles, mumps and rubella](#) are all combined into one injection – the MMR vaccine.

Two doses of the vaccine are given as part of the routine childhood immunisation in the UK. The first dose of MMR vaccine is usually given to children aged 12-13 months, and a second dose is given as a preschool booster.

The vaccine is also offered to older children and adults who have not received the two routine doses during childhood.

The vaccine stimulates your child's immune system to make antibodies against the three viruses. These antibodies then help to protect your child against infection.

Before your child is given measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine

Before your child is given MMR vaccine, make sure your doctor knows:

- If your child has been unwell recently or has a high temperature (fever).
- If your child has previously had an allergic reaction to a vaccine or medicine.
- If your child has a rare metabolic disorder called phenylketonuria (PKU).
- If your child has a condition that makes them bleed more than is normal, such as haemophilia.
- If you have been told your child has a weakened immune system.

If the vaccine is for you (rather than for a child), you must tell your doctor if any of the above apply to you. It is also important that you let your doctor know if you could be pregnant, or if you are breastfeeding.

How the vaccine is given

- Before your child is given the vaccine, ask to read the manufacturer's printed information leaflet. The manufacturer's leaflet will give you more information about the vaccine and will tell you about any side-effects which your child may experience from having it. If you have any questions about the vaccine, ask your doctor or nurse for advice.
- Your child will be given two doses of the vaccine. It is usual for the first dose to be given between 12 and 13 months of age, and the second before they start school.

- In younger children the vaccine is usually given by injection into a muscle in their upper leg. Older children will be given the injection into a muscle in their upper arm. If your child has a condition which makes them bleed more than normal, the vaccine will be given as an injection under their skin rather than into a muscle.

Getting the most from the treatment

- If your child has a high temperature (fever) or is acutely unwell at the time of a scheduled immunisation, the doctor or nurse may recommend delaying giving the vaccine. A minor illness (such as a cough, cold or snuffles) will not interfere with the vaccine. If a delay is advised, you will be given an alternative appointment for the vaccination to be given.

Can measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine cause problems?

Along with their useful effects, vaccines like most medicines can cause unwanted side-effects, although not everyone experiences them. MMR immunisation frequently causes no problems, but the table below contains some of the side-effects which may occur. You will find a full list in the manufacturer's information leaflet supplied with the vaccine. Speak with a doctor or nurse if any of the following side-effects continue or become troublesome.

Common MMR vaccine side-effects	What can I do if I experience this?
Soreness, swelling, or redness around the site of the injection	This should soon pass. If you are concerned, speak with your doctor, nurse or health visitor
A raised temperature (fever)	This is usually mild and soon passes, but if your child seems unwell or upset, give one dose of paracetamol, followed by a second dose 4–6 hours later if needed. (Alternatively, one dose of ibuprofen can be given, followed by a second dose six hours later.) Check the directions on the label to make sure you give the correct dose for the age of your child
Rash	This may occur a week after the injection and last a day or so. If it persists or if it is severe, speak with your doctor
Flu-like symptoms, swollen glands (after three weeks)	These should soon pass. If your child seems unwell or upset, try giving a dose of paracetamol or ibuprofen. Check the directions on the label to make sure you give the correct dose for the age of your child

You will normally be asked by the doctor or nurse to wait several minutes after the immunisation to make sure that there is no adverse reaction to the vaccine. Although allergic reactions are extremely rare, you should seek urgent medical advice if your child becomes breathless, or if any severe swelling or rash develops within a few days of the immunisation.

If you experience any other symptoms which you think may be due to the vaccine, speak with your doctor or pharmacist.

If you experience side effects, you can report them online through the [Yellow Card website](#).

Further reading

- [Manufacturer's PIL, MMRvaxPro®](#); Sanofi Pasteur MSD Limited, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated September 2022.
- [Manufacturer's PIL, Priorix®](#); GlaxoSmithKline UK, The electronic Medicines Compendium. Dated February 2022.
- [Medicines Complete BNF 87th Edition](#); British Medical Association and Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain, London.

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