

Measles Questions and Answers for Parents and Carers

With cases of measles rising across the country, the NHS is encouraging people to check that they and their children have had two doses of the MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella) vaccine.

- The MMR vaccination being offered is not an extra dose but a catch up on childhood vaccinations that may have been missed.
- London has lower rates of childhood vaccination than other regions in England and this was made worse by the COVID-19 pandemic, when many children missed their vaccinations.
- The free MMR vaccine is a safe and effective way of protecting against measles, as well as mumps and rubella.
- The NHS in London is encouraging all parents of children aged 1 to 16 who are not yet up-to-date with their routine vaccinations for polio, measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) to come forward.
- If your child is missing a vaccination, you may be contacted by a health care professional and invited for a convenient appointment to catch up on your child's vaccinations. This could be at a school, community clinic or your GP surgery.
- Parents and guardians are asked to check their child's Red Book to see if they're up to date on their MMR vaccinations or alternatively check with their GP surgery. It's never too late to catch up on missed doses.

Questions & Answers



Contents

1. What is measles and what are the symptoms?
2. What should you do if you think you or your child may have measles?
3. When should you keep your child off school?
4. What is the best way to protect against measles?
5. How to get an MMR vaccine for your child?
6. What are the side effects of the MMR vaccine?
7. Does the MMR vaccine contain pork content (porcine gelatine)?
8. Resources

1. What is measles and what are the symptoms?

Measles is an infection that spreads very easily and can cause serious illness in some people. Measles is more than just a rash, in some cases it can lead to meningitis and sepsis, causing a risk to life.

1 in 5 cases of measles cases requires a hospital visit.

Measles usually starts with cold-like symptoms, followed by a rash a few days later. Some people may also get small spots in their mouth.

Cold-like symptoms

The first symptoms of measles include:

- a high temperature
- a runny or blocked nose
- sneezing
- a cough
- red, sore, watery eyes

Spots in the mouth

A number of small white spots inside a person's mouth



Small white spots may appear inside the cheeks and on the back of the lips a few days later. These spots usually last a few days.

The measles rash

A rash usually appears a few days after the cold-like symptoms.

The rash starts on the face and behind the ears before spreading to the rest of the body. The spots of the measles rash are sometimes raised and join together to form blotchy patches. They are not usually itchy.

The rash looks brown or red on white skin. It may be harder to see on brown and black skin.



2. What should you do if you think you or your child may have measles

You should ask for an urgent GP appointment or get help from NHS 111 if:

- you think you or your child may have measles
- your child is under 1 year old and has come into contact with someone who has measles
- You have been in close contact with someone who has measles and you're pregnant or have a weakened immune system

3. When should you keep your child off school, nursery or other activities and how long for?

If your child has measles, they should stay off nursery, school or other activities for at least 4 days from when the rash first appears and avoid close contact with babies and anyone who is pregnant or has a weakened immune system.

The Health Protection Team may advise people who are more vulnerable to getting measles such as unvaccinated siblings to stay away for the incubation period.

The incubation period is the length of time it can take to develop the illness after being in contact with someone with measles. For measles, the incubation period can be up to 21 days.

Cold-like symptoms can be an early sign of measles. Should you still send your child to school, nursery or other activities?

If your child has been vaccinated, it is very unlikely that they have measles.

School attendance is very important to your child's learning and health.

According to the NHS, it is fine to send your child to school with a minor cough or common cold, provided they don't have a temperature.

Should you keep your child off school, nursery or other activities if another pupil has been diagnosed with measles?

Most children will be protected against measles and there is no need to keep your child off school, nursery or other activities if they have had both their MMR vaccinations.

Your local Health Protection Team will tell you if your child has been in contact with someone with measles and will let you know what the next steps are.

4. What is the best way to protect against measles?

The best protection against measles for children and adults is to get both doses of the MMR vaccine. MMR vaccine is safe and very effective. After two doses around 99% of people will be protected against measles

Children are offered a vaccine free on the NHS at 12-months-old and then a second dose when they turn 3-years-and-4-months-old.

But you can catch up at any age – if you or your child have not yet been vaccinated, you should contact your GP practice to book a free appointment.

If your child has only had one dose then they will only need one further dose, no matter how long ago the first dose was given. If your child needs two doses, these can be given with a one month gap between them.

5. How to get an MMR vaccination for your child

Parents/guardians of children aged 1-16 years old who are missing any doses can schedule catch-up appointments with their GP practice. Anyone not registered with a GP can register online [here](#)

Those with school-aged children (aged 4-16) can also contact their local school-aged immunisation service:

Vaccination UK

Phone - 0203 343 2400 option 4

email - appointments@v-uk.co.uk

Over April there will also be a number of Saturday walk-in clinics for the MMR catch up vaccine in Tower Hamlets. More information including dates and locations can be found [here](#). All ages are welcome and you do not need to book an appointment first.

If you have any questions about the clinic or would like book an appointment please phone **07814 444 094**.

6. What are the side effects of the MMR vaccine?

The MMR vaccine is very safe. All medicines have side effects, and it is normal to experience them after a vaccination. Most side effects are mild and do not last long, such as:

- the area where the needle goes in looking red, swollen and feeling sore for 2 to 3 days as it heals from the injection
- around 7 to 11 days after the injection, babies or young children may feel a bit unwell, or develop a high temperature for about 2 or 3 days
- MMR is made up of 3 different vaccines (measles, mumps and rubella) which can cause reactions at different times after the injection.

These symptoms usually pass within a couple of days and you don't need to do anything about them.

Some children might also cry and be upset immediately after the injection. This is normal and they should feel better after being comforted.

Most people who get MMR vaccine do not have any serious problems with it. Getting the MMR vaccine is much safer than getting measles, mumps, or rubella.

7. Does the MMR vaccine contain pork content (porcine gelatine)?

There are 2 different types of MMR vaccine available in the UK - one that does contain pork content and one that does not.

If you cannot have the vaccine that contains pork content (porcine gelatine), you can ask for an MMR vaccine that does not contain this ingredient.

You can request this version of the MMR vaccine from your GP, making it suitable for all faiths. Please note that the practice may need to order this product in specially, so it will be helpful to tell them before the appointment.

8. Resources

| Resource | Link |
|---|---|
| Measles information leaflet for children) | Measles – don't let your child catch it (publishing.service.gov.uk) |
| Measles leaflet for all ages | https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mmr-for-all-general-leaflet |

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| Information on MMR vaccine and Pork content | https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/63349f2c8fa8f50684f6ccad/UKHSA-12462-vaccines-porcine-gelatine-English.pdf |
| NHS MMR vaccine information | https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/mmr-vaccine/ |
| Tower Hamlets childhood immunisations page) | https://www.towerhamlets.gov.uk/lgnl/health_social_care/public_health/immunisation.aspx (|
| School aged immunisation service | https://www.schoolvaccination.uk/ |
| MMR vaccine video in Somali | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Rm6Uq-IHH_E |
| vaccine safety and information | https://vaccineknowledge.ox.ac.uk/vaccine-safety BSI_Guide_Childhood_Vaccinations_2023.pdf (immunology.org) |
| NHS childhood vaccine schedule | https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/nhs-vaccinations-and-when-to-have-them |

