



Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR) Vaccine

The MMR vaccine is a three-in-one immunization that protects against measles, mumps and rubella (German measles). It is given to children soon after their first birthday and again between 4 and 6 years of age. MMR vaccine is required by law for all children attending school in Ontario (unless exempted). The vaccine is also given to adults who are not protected against measles, mumps or rubella. Pregnant women who have been told that they are not protected against rubella, should receive MMR vaccine as soon as they are no longer pregnant.

What is measles?

Measles can be a serious infection. It causes high fever, cough, rash, runny nose and watery eyes. Measles lasts for one to two weeks. It can be complicated by ear infections, pneumonia and infection of the brain (encephalitis). Measles can also make a pregnant woman have a miscarriage or give birth prematurely. Measles spreads from person to person through coughing, sneezing or simply talking.

What is mumps?

Mumps can cause fever, headache and swelling of the cheek, jaw and neck (caused by infection of the salivary glands). Complications of mumps include: meningitis (infection of the fluid and lining covering the brain and spinal cord); deafness; painful swollen testicles in males; and painful infection of the ovaries in females. Mumps infection during the first three months of pregnancy may increase the risk of miscarriage. Mumps spreads through coughs, sneezes and contact with the saliva of an infected person.

What is Rubella (German measles)?

Rubella may cause fever, sore throat, swollen glands in the neck and a rash on the face and neck. Temporary aches and pains and swelling of the joints are common in teenagers and adults. Rubella can be followed by chronic arthritis. It can also cause temporary blood clotting problems and encephalitis. Rubella is very dangerous in pregnant women. If a woman gets rubella in the early part of a pregnancy, it is very likely that her baby will develop congenital rubella syndrome and be severely disabled or die. Rubella spreads through coughing, sneezing or talking and by contact with the saliva of infected people.

Is the MMR vaccine safe?

Yes. Most people will have no side effects. MMR vaccine can cause a rash or fever in some people 6 to 23 days after the needle is given. This may last for a few days. Occasionally, a high fever can cause a convulsion especially in children who have had convulsions before or whose parents or siblings have had convulsions. The vaccine may also cause swelling of the glands in the neck. Very rarely, the vaccine may cause a mild meningitis, swelling and pain in some joints or chronic arthritis. Mild temporary blood clotting problems have been reported. There is no risk of a pregnant woman or anyone else catching measles, mumps or rubella from a child who has been vaccinated recently. It is safe to give MMR vaccine to women who are breastfeeding. **You should always discuss the benefits and risks of any vaccine with your healthcare provider or local public health unit prior to receiving the vaccine.**

Who should not have MMR vaccine?

The following children and adults should not have MMR vaccine:

- anyone who is ill with a fever or infection worse than a cold. Vaccination should be delayed until the symptoms resolve.
- anyone who has had a severe allergic reaction to a prior dose of this vaccine
- anyone taking medication that lowers the body's ability to fight infections
- pregnant women: If a woman gets the MMR vaccine and then discovers she is pregnant, she should call her health care provider. However, the risk of damage to the fetus is small. Also, women of childbearing age should be advised to avoid pregnancy for 1 month following immunization with MMR vaccine
- anyone who is allergic to any component of the vaccine (neomycin, gelatin, mannitol, sorbitol)
- received blood or blood products
- those who have medical conditions that may be contraindicated (for example, individuals with history of convulsions, certain immunosuppressant medications, congenital or hereditary immunodeficiency).

The MMR vaccine may be given to people who are allergic to eggs even if they have hives, wheezing, difficulty breathing or swelling of the face or mouth after eating eggs, as long as they are observed after the vaccine for signs of a reaction.

Who should I talk to if I have any questions?

Talk to your doctor/nurse practitioner or call Renfrew County and District Health Unit Health Info Line at 613-735-8666 or 1-800-267-1097, Ext. 666.

Your record of protection

After you or your child receives any immunization, make sure the personal immunization record (Yellow Card) is updated. Keep these records in a safe place.

Renfrew County and District Health Unit

7 International Drive
Pembroke, Ontario K8A 6W5
613-735-8666 or 1-800-267-1097, Ext. 666.

Adapted from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Immunization: Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR) Vaccine (April 2015) and Publicly Funded Immunization Schedules for Ontario – March 2015.

March 2016