

MEASLES

Don't let your child catch it

– get them vaccinated with the MMR vaccine

- Measles is in the news again. There have been serious outbreaks in Wales and England and the number of children catching measles is rising.
- Measles can be a very serious disease, leading to ear and chest infections, fits, diarrhoea, and damage to the brain. Measles can kill.
- Your child is at risk of measles if he or she hasn't had the MMR vaccination.
- Two doses of MMR vaccine are needed to get the best protection.
- If your child is due to have had two doses of MMR but has not yet received them, no matter what age they are, you should contact your GP to get them vaccinated as soon as possible.*
- If you can't remember if your child has had any, one or two doses of MMR vaccine, check his or her personal child health record (the Red Book). If this doesn't help, speak to your GP.
- If you don't know how many doses your child has had, it's better to have two doses of MMR vaccine now rather than risk leaving them unprotected.

*In response to a local outbreak then the two doses can be given one month apart from the age of 18 months.

Answers to some common questions about measles and the MMR vaccine

Why are we seeing these outbreaks of measles?

Measles is a highly infectious disease, spreading quickly from person to person, especially in schools. A child with measles will infect almost all unprotected children they have contact with. Although we have high rates of vaccination in the UK, the levels dropped some years ago when the MMR vaccine was mistakenly associated with autism. This led to some mothers not getting their children vaccinated and so measles is now spreading rapidly among these children.

Because of the scare some years ago, I gave my child a single measles vaccination, can they have the two doses of MMR?

Yes; it's recommended your child has two doses of MMR. You will also be protecting them against rubella and mumps.

When are the MMR vaccinations usually given?

The best times are between 12 and 13 months of age and again at three years and four months, with one dose on each occasion. But, if your child wasn't vaccinated then, they can be vaccinated at any age with two doses one month apart.

Will there be any side effects to the vaccination?

Your child may get the symptoms of measles, mumps and rubella for up to six weeks after the vaccination but in a very much milder form. This proves that the vaccine is working and your child is building up resistance to future contact with the viruses that cause the three diseases. Not all children show these symptoms but that doesn't mean the vaccine isn't working.

Should parents in outbreak areas get vaccinated against measles?

As with many diseases, once you have had measles, you don't catch it again because you have built up a natural resistance to it. So, if you've had measles or two doses of MMR vaccine you do not need to get vaccinated now.

Back in 1994, a large part of the population aged 5 to 16 was immunised against measles and rubella so people in this age group are almost certainly immune and therefore they too don't need to get vaccinated now.

For more information about measles and MMR go to: www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles/Pages/Introduction.aspx