

Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine

Parent Information Sheet

The Australian Government makes some vaccines free under the National Immunisation Program (NIP).

Q. What are measles, mumps and rubella?

Measles is a highly contagious virus that causes fever, cough, and a rash. It can lead to serious complications like pneumonia, brain swelling and permanent brain damage. Rarely measles can be fatal.

Mumps is a contagious viral infection that causes swollen neck glands and fever. In about 10% of cases, it can lead to brain inflammation. In 15–30% of males past puberty, it can cause swollen and painful testes. Infection during early pregnancy may cause miscarriage.

Rubella (German Measles) is a virus that causes rash, fever, and swollen glands. If a pregnant woman gets rubella, her baby can develop serious birth defects, such as hearing loss, blindness, intellectual disability, or heart problems.

Q. How do measles, mumps and rubella spread?

These viruses spread through coughs and sneezes. Measles is especially contagious. Being in the same room as an infected person can spread the virus.

Q. How do vaccines work?

Vaccines help the immune system fight infections. If a vaccinated person is exposed to the virus, their body can fight the illness better or make it less severe.

Q. How effective is the MMR vaccine?

The MMR vaccine is very effective at protecting against measles, mumps, and rubella.

Q. How many doses are needed?

Two doses of the MMR vaccine unless they have already had two doses in the past.

Q. Who should not get the vaccine?

Do not give the MMR vaccine to people who:

- had a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to a previous dose or an ingredient in the vaccine
- are pregnant (pregnancy should also be avoided for 28 days after vaccination)
- had a live vaccine (like chickenpox, BCG, or yellow fever) in the past 4 weeks
- had a blood transfusion or immunoglobulin injection in the past year
- have a weak immune system, including:
 - people with HIV/AIDS
 - people taking high doses of oral corticosteroids
 - people on strong immunosuppressive treatments, radiation, or x-ray therapy
 - people with certain cancers like lymphoma, leukaemia, or Hodgkin's disease.

Q. What is in the MMR vaccine?

The vaccine contains small amounts of lactose, neomycin, sorbitol, and mannitol. These ingredients help the vaccine work or preserve it.

Q. How safe are vaccines?

Vaccines in Australia are very safe. They must pass strict safety checks before approval by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). The TGA also monitors vaccine safety after use.

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

The MMR vaccine is safe and well-tolerated. Common side effects are mild and may include:

- feeling unwell
- fever
- a non-infectious rash (may appear 5–12 days after vaccination).

Rare side effects may include:

- temporary swollen lymph nodes
- joint pain
- increased risk of bruising or bleeding.

Serious side effects like anaphylaxis are extremely rare.

For more information, check the Consumer Medical Information (CMI) at health.nsw.gov.au/schoolvaccination. If you are concerned about side effects, contact your GP.

Q. What is anaphylaxis?

Anaphylaxis is a very rare but severe allergic reaction. It can cause unconsciousness or death if not treated quickly. Immunisation providers are trained to manage anaphylaxis.

Q. Can pregnant students get the vaccine?

No. Pregnant students should not get the vaccine.

On vaccination day, nurses will ask female students if they are or could be pregnant. If a student says yes, she will not be vaccinated. She will be advised to talk to her parent or doctor and will be given contact details for a support service.

Female students who receive the MMR vaccine should not become pregnant for 28 days after vaccination.

Q. Who can give consent, and can it be withdrawn?

Parents or guardians must give consent for students under 18. Students aged 18 and older can give their own consent by signing the Consent Form.

You can withdraw consent at any time by writing to the school or calling them.

Q. What if my child missed the vaccine because they were sick or absent?

If your child missed their vaccination at school, arrange a catch-up as soon as possible. Some schools offer catch-up clinics. If not, contact your GP or pharmacist to arrange the vaccination.

Q. How can I access a record of my child's vaccinations?

Your child's vaccination record will be added to the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR).

Parents can request their child's Immunisation History Statement until the child turns 14. Students aged 14 and older can request their own record. You can access it:

- through your Medicare online account at my.gov.au
- using the Medicare Express Plus App: servicesaustralia.gov.au/express-plus-medicare-mobile-app
- by calling the AIR General Enquiries Line at 1800 653 809.

Q. What happens to my child's information?

The information on the Consent Form is private and protected by law. It will be added to the NSW Health immunisation register and linked to the AIR so it can be viewed on MyGov.

Q. Where can I find more information about school vaccination?

You can find more details:

- on the NSW Health website: health.nsw.gov.au/schoolvaccination
- by calling your local public health unit at 1300 066 055.

Your next steps:

- If you want your child to get the Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine, complete and sign the Consent Form. Return it to the school with your child.
- If you do not want your child to get the vaccine, do not provide consent.

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