



Measles, Mumps, and Rubella Vaccines

What Are Measles, Mumps, and Rubella?

The measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine is one of the recommended childhood vaccinations. The three-in-one vaccine protects against three potentially serious illnesses. In most states, proof of the MMR vaccine is required for children to enter school. But if you are an adult who has not had the vaccination or the diseases, it may be important for you to receive the MMR shot, too. Measles, mumps, and rubella are viral diseases. All have the potential to be very serious.

What is the MMR vaccine?

The MMR vaccine protects against the measles, mumps and rubella. It is given as 2 shots.

Measles

Measles causes fever, rash, cough, runny nose and watery eyes. It can also cause ear infections and pneumonia. Measles can also lead to more serious problems, such as brain swelling and even death. Measles is characterized by fever, cough, runny nose, conjunctivitis (pinkeye), and a red, pinpoint rash that starts on the face and spreads to the rest of the body. If the measles virus infects the lungs, it can cause pneumonia. Some older children infected with the virus suffer from encephalitis (inflammation of the brain), which can cause seizures and permanent brain damage..

Mumps

Mumps causes fever, headache and painful swelling of one or both of the major saliva glands. Mumps can lead to meningitis (infection of the coverings of the brain and spinal cord) and, very rarely, to brain swelling. Rarely, it can cause the testicles of boys or men to swell, which can make them unable to have children.

Before the development of the mumps vaccine, mumps was the most common cause of meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain and spinal cord) and acquired deafness in the U.S

Rubella

Rubella is also called the German measles. In children, rubella infection causes a mild rash on the face, swelling of glands behind the ears, and in some cases swelling of the small joints and a low-grade fever. Most children recover quickly from rubella with no lasting effects. If a pregnant woman gets rubella, however, the results can be devastating. If she is infected during the first trimester of pregnancy, there is a great chance her child will have a birth defect such as blindness, deafness, a heart defect, or mental retardation.

Who Should and Shouldn't Get the MMR Vaccine

MMR is given in two shots, typically during childhood. Children should receive the first shot between 12-15 months and the second between 4-6 years of age.

MMR Risks and Side Effects

Most people who receive the MMR vaccine have no problems from it. Some experience minor soreness and redness at the injection site or fever. Despite speculation and considerable publicity, there is no evidence that MMR vaccine causes autism. The potential benefits of the vaccine far outweigh its potential risks.

For more information about this subject please check:

The Center for Disease Control at www.cdc.gov/

The American Academy of Pediatrics at www.aap.org