

Measles information for Travellers and People working with Travellers

Note: The following information reflects updated advice relating to measles as of **September 7th 2010**

Version 1.1 Date: 07/09/2010

Amendment: MMR vaccination recommendations are now the same for all Irish children, whether Traveller or settled community- 1st dose at 12 months and 2nd dose at 4-5 years of age- unless Measles is circulating in community, in which case 1st vaccination at 6 months and another dose at 12 months)

The numbers of people affected by measles during the large measles outbreak reported during 2009-2010 has decreased. However, measles cases continue to be reported. Measles is a highly infectious illness. It can be serious and can kill.

Measles key points

- Measles affects adults and children.
- Measles spreads very easily.
- People with measles usually have
 - a high fever
 - cough
 - runny nose
 - red eyes
 - red rash that starts on head and moves down the body.
- Measles can cause
 - chest infections
 - fits
 - swelling of the brain
 - brain damage.
- Measles can kill
 - children died from the last outbreak of measles in 2000.
- Measles is worst for
 - children less than 1 year of age
 - pregnant women and their unborn child
 - people with very weak immunity.
- The MMR vaccine does not cause autism.
- The MMR vaccine is as safe as any vaccine can be
- It's never too late to get vaccinated.

Who is at risk of measles?

Children or adults 32 years or younger (born since 1978) who have not been vaccinated with 2 doses of MMR vaccine (measles-mumps-rubella vaccine) can get measles.

How do I protect myself and my children from measles?

You are protected against measles if you have had 2 MMR vaccines or if you have had the measles infection. There is no other way to prevent measles infection.

If everyone was vaccinated with 2 doses of MMR vaccine no measles could occur.

When is MMR usually given?

MMR is routinely offered at 12 months of age and again at 4-5 years of age.

Who should NOT get the vaccine?

There are very few people who should not get MMR vaccine.

You should NOT get the vaccine if

- You have had a true allergic reaction to MMR vaccine in the past or to one of its products.
- Your immune system is not working (due to current treatment or illness).
- You are pregnant or think you may be pregnant.

You should delay getting the vaccine if you have a high fever (greater than 38°C) or a serious illness affecting your immune system.

What Travellers should get the MMR?

All Traveller children and adults 32 years or younger (born since 1978) who have not had 2 doses of MMR, or who are not sure, should be vaccinated with MMR now.

- All Traveller children should get the first dose of MMR at 12 months of age (*please note recommendations are now the same for all Irish children, whether Traveller or settled community*)
 - Children older than 12 months of age who have not got the MMR should get it immediately
 - Children should get the second dose at 4- 5 years of age
 - Children can get the 2nd MMR before the age of 4 years if needed. At least one month is needed between the first and second dose.

Where can I go for the vaccine?

- You should go to you GP to get vaccinated. The GP will decide if and when a further dose is required.

I am not sure if I was vaccinated- what should I do?

- If not sure about the vaccine history it's best to get the vaccine – having an extra dose of MMR vaccine will not do any harm.

What can I expect after vaccination?

- After getting the vaccine your arm may be sore and/or red where the injection was given. This only lasts a short time. You may also get a fever, rash, sore throat and/or a headache about 5-12 days after the vaccination which may last 1-2 days. If this happens you can take paracetamol or ibuprofen.

How does the MMR vaccine work?

The MMR vaccine contains weakened forms of the natural viruses to give protection against disease. The vaccine causes the body's immune system to respond to and 'remember' the viruses in the vaccine. This means that if the person is later infected with the real viruses these are very quickly recognised by the immune system which reacts quickly to stop the infection.

How long does it take for the vaccine to work?

It can take up to 14 days before you will be protected.

If you think your child or family member might have measles;

Children/adults are infectious from 4 days before to 4 days after rash starts so it is important to stay at home and away from people at this time.

- Phone your GP immediately and tell the practice that you think you/your child might have measles.
 - The sooner you or your child is seen the sooner action can be taken to prevent further measles cases occurring.
- Try not to spread measles to other people.
 - The person with measles should stay at home (unless you need to see a doctor)
 - Stop visitors coming to your home unless they have had two doses of MMR or had measles infection previously.
 - If you go to the hospital (Emergency Department)
 - please let the staff know that you think the child might have measles so that they can arrange to keep your child separate from other children.
 - Do not send your child to school if they have measles.

What do I do if I have been in contact with someone who has measles?

Any child or adult 32 years of age or younger (born since 1978) who has not had 2 doses of the MMR vaccine or has never had measles needs to be vaccinated immediately (ideally within 72 hours).

Pregnant women, babies and people with weak immune systems should speak with their GP immediately as they may need other types of protection (immunoglobulin).

Staff Specific Information:

- All staff should be protected against measles (vaccinated or had measles in past). Those who are not immune are at risk of measles put other children and staff at risk if they become infected.
- An adult 32 years of age or younger (born since 1978) may not be fully protected against measles unless they have received two doses of MMR. Older staff are likely to be immune due to natural infection as a child.

Recommendations for Health Care workers

- All health care workers born since 1978 should have documented evidence of measles immunity or of having received two doses of MMR vaccine. Staff without such documentation should be vaccinated with 2 doses of MMR, separated by at least one month.
- Only healthcare workers known to be immune to measles should provide care for patients with known or suspect measles.
- Any staff member who has been exposed to measles and does not have evidence of immunity should receive MMR immediately.
- Blood testing is only recommended for staff without evidence of immunity if they are pregnant or cannot have the MMR vaccine.

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