

The Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) Vaccine

Vaccine Information Sheet

March 2024 | www.hss.gov.nt.ca

The best way to protect yourself against measles, mumps, and rubella is to get an MMR vaccine.

What is the MMR Vaccine?

The MMR vaccine is a safe and effective way to keep you and your family from getting very sick from mumps, measles, and/or rubella. The MMR vaccine (shot) is made with a small amount of weakened germs that cannot cause disease and help the immune system learn how to protect itself. This vaccine can be given to healthy children and adults aged 12 months and older.

What are these diseases?

Measles (rubeola), also known as “red measles”, is a virus that causes blotchy red rash, fever, cough, runny nose, and red, watery eyes. Most people fully recover from measles within 2-3 weeks, but measles can be dangerous, especially for infants, pregnant women, and those with weakened immune systems. In some cases, measles can cause swelling of the brain leading to seizures, hearing loss, or even death.

Because of immunization, measles was a rare disease in Canada, but outbreaks have been occurring with increasing frequency. Measles occurs all over the world and is one of the most contagious diseases we know of. The MMR vaccine is very effective against measles, 2 doses are almost 100% effective in protecting against the measles virus.

Mumps is a virus that causes painful swelling of the cheeks and neck, fever, dry mouth, headache, earache, fatigue, sore muscles, loss of appetite, and trouble talking, chewing, or swallowing. Mumps can also cause deafness, meningitis, and infections of the testicles or ovaries.

Rubella, also known as “German measles”, is a virus that causes rash and low-grade fever, swelling of the lymph nodes, and achy joints and muscles. Rubella infection in pregnant women can lead to miscarriage and birth defects.

How are these diseases spread?

These viruses spread easily through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. You become infected when you breathe in air or touch a surface contaminated with the virus. These viruses can also be spread through contact with an infected person's saliva or skin lesions through things like kissing, sharing food/drinks, cigarettes, or toys.

Who should get the MMR vaccine?

MMR is offered as two doses given at least 4 weeks apart.

All adults born on or after 1970 should have 2 doses of MMR vaccine in their lifetime.

Adults born before 1970:

If you were born before 1970, you are assumed to be immune to measles as you likely had contact with measles when you were younger. However, it is recommended that you receive 1-2 doses of measles containing vaccine to ensure protection if you are:

- In the military.
- A health care provider.
- Travelling outside of Canada.

If you are unsure if you or your child are protected, or for travel with infants under 12 months of age, please call 811 or book an appointment with your local health care provider to discuss vaccination eligibility.



What are possible reactions to the MMR vaccine?

Vaccines, like any medicine, can have side effects. These reactions are normal and usually go away within a few days. You can give medication for pain/fever to your child if needed. Check with your health care provider if you have concerns or need advice about which medications to give.

Mild side effects include:

- Swelling, redness, and soreness where you got the vaccine.

1-3 weeks after getting the vaccine some people get:

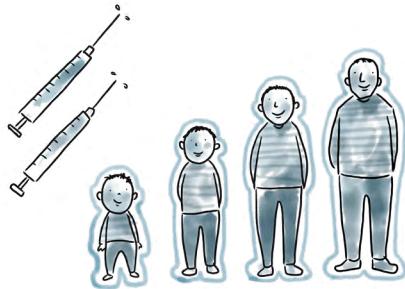
- Fever,
- Stiffness,
- Mild rash,
- Face or neck swelling,
- Temporary joint pain.

Who should NOT get the MMR vaccine?

This vaccine is not generally recommended for:

- Babies under 6 months old.
- People with weakened immune systems.
- People who are pregnant.

Please contact your health care provider for more information.



To find out more about the MMR vaccine, contact your local health centre and visit the following links:

- **NWT Immunization Schedule**
<http://www.hss.gov.nt.ca>
- **Immunize Canada**
<http://www.immunize.ca>

To keep track of your family's immunizations and to receive your vaccine schedule reminders, download the [CANImmunize App](#).

It is important to stay in the clinic for 15 minutes after getting any vaccine because there is a rare possibility of a severe allergic reaction.

This usually happens soon after vaccination and may include: **hives, difficulty breathing, or swelling of the throat, tongue or lips.**

If this happens after you leave the clinic, call or go to the nearest Emergency Department or your local health centre for immediate treatment.

Please report any serious or unexpected side-effects to your public health nurse.

Place Health Centre
contact information here.

If you would like this information in another official language, contact us at 1-855-846-9601.

Si vous voulez ces renseignements dans une autre langue officielle, communiquez avec nous au 1-855-846-9601.