



INFORMATION SHEET

Measles, Mumps, Rubella and Varicella Vaccine (MMRV)

What is the MMRV Vaccine?

The MMRV vaccine is a safe and effective way to keep your child from getting very sick from measles, mumps, rubella and/or varicella. The MMRV vaccine is made with a small amount of weakened virus that is unlikely to cause disease but teaches the immune system how to protect itself against infection. This vaccine is routinely given to healthy children 12 months to 12 years of age.

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.

Thanks to successful vaccination programs, measles was a rare disease and considered eliminated in Canada, but outbreaks in unvaccinated communities have been occurring with increasing frequency. Measles is one of the most contagious diseases we know of. You don’t even have to be in the same room as someone with measles to get infected. The measles virus can hang in the air for up to two hours after a person leaves the room.

The MMRV vaccine is very effective. Receiving two doses is 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.

Immunization is the best way to protect your child from getting measles, mumps, rubella and/or varicella.

In the NWT, children are recommended to receive MMRV at 12 and 18 months.

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.

Varicella, also called chickenpox, is a virus that causes a very itchy rash with blisters all over the body. Varicella is spread through the air or by contact with chickenpox or shingles blisters and can be serious, especially for newborn babies and adults who have weakened immune systems.

Complications from varicella infection include:

- Pneumonia (lung infection),
- Encephalitis (swelling of the brain),
- Bacterial infections of the skin.
- A pregnant person can pass varicella to their unborn baby.

Once you have had varicella, it stays in the body forever. For some people, the virus becomes active again later causing a painful blistering rash called “shingles”.

If you are unsure if your child should receive MMRV, book an appointment with your local health care provider to discuss vaccination eligibility.

How are these diseases spread?

People spread these viruses 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 MMRV vaccine?

In the NWT, it is recommended that children receive the MMRV vaccine at 12 and 18 months. MMRV is offered as two doses given at least 12 weeks apart.

Pregnant individuals, babies under 6 months and immunocompromised persons are not able to receive the MMRV vaccine, so it is strongly recommended that persons around them receive the vaccine to best protect them.

What are possible side effects to the MMRV vaccine?

Vaccines, like any medicine, can have side effects. Side effects, if they occur, are usually mild and go away within a few days. You can give medication for pain/fever 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, other side effects can include:

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

Who should NOT get the MMRV vaccine?

- MMRV is a "live" vaccine and can cause measles, mumps, rubella and/or varicella in a person whose immune system is moderately to severely weakened, less than 6 months, or is pregnant. These individuals should NOT receive MMRV vaccine. Neither should those with a severe allergy. Please contact your health care provider for more information.

To find out more about the MMRV vaccine, contact your local health unit or visit the following links:

- **NWT Immunization Schedule:**
<https://www.gov.nt.ca/nwtimmunization/schedule>
- **Immunize Canada** <https://immunize.ca>
- To track of your family's immunizations and to receive 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 health centre for immediate treatment.

Please report any serious or unexpected side-effects to your healthcare provider