

The Measles, Mumps, Rubella, and Varicella (MMRV) Vaccine

What is the MMRV Vaccine?

The MMRV vaccine is a safe and effective way to keep your child from getting very sick from mumps, measles, rubella, and/or varicella (chickenpox). The MMRV 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 aged 12 months to 12 years.

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 MMRV 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.

The best way to protect your child against measles, mumps, rubella, and varicella is to get a MMRV vaccine.

In the NWT, children are scheduled to get MMRV at 12 and 18 months.

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”.

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.



What are possible reactions to the MMRV 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 MMRV vaccine?

This vaccine is not generally recommended for:

- Babies under 6 months old and children over 12.
- People with weakened immune systems.
- People who are pregnant.
- Please contact your health care provider for more information.

Why should your child get the MMRV vaccine?

Immunization is the best way to protect against measles, mumps, rubella, and varicella and the MMRV vaccine can give life-long protection. When you are immunized, you help to protect others because an immunized person is less likely to spread infection.

Pregnant individuals, babies, and people who are immunocompromised are protected from these diseases when those around them are immunized.

If you are unsure if your child is 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.



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.