

# Fact sheet: MMR vaccine

## What is the Measle, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine?

- The MMR vaccine is an injection that immunises people against measles, mumps and rubella.
- Although most people recover from getting measles, people can get very sick and getting the disease can lead to hospitalisation and in rare cases death.
- Under the current outbreak of measles the Ministry of Health is recommending that:
  - All children aged between 12 months and 12 years receive at least one dose of MMR,
  - All 4 year olds should receive their second dose of MMR as per The National Immunisation Schedule,
  - All adults under 40 years of age who are not recorded as immunised and have not had measles receive one dose of MMR.
- Immunisation is free for all who meet the above criteria.
- If you do not know if you have had the measles in the past, or have not received the recommended doses of MMR, call your GP to discuss.

## How effective is the MMR vaccine?

- One dose is likely to give over 90% of the population protection against measles.
- A second dose is given to children to cover any children who may not have responded to the first dose.
- Protection rates increase by 5-7% with the second dose.

## Who should not receive the MMR vaccination?

- There are some people who cannot receive the MMR vaccine. It is important that their family and close contacts are immunised to help protect them.
- Pregnant women should not receive the vaccine.
- Anyone with a weakened immune system, such as cancer patients receiving treatment, should not receive the vaccine.
- Anyone who has had an anaphylactic reaction to gelatin, or the antibiotic neomycin, shouldn't have the vaccine.
- It is important you check with your GP or call Healthline on 0800 611 116 if you are not sure if you should be immunised.

## Is the vaccine safe?

- MMR vaccine has an excellent safety record.
- It is not dangerous to receive the vaccine more than once.
- The MMR vaccine is made using a protein related to egg. Evidence shows that it is safe to give the MMR vaccine to nearly all children, even those who have a very severe reaction to eggs. Your GP can make special arrangements to give the MMR vaccine safely, in hospital if necessary.
- Scientific evidence, based on the records of millions of MMR vaccinations shows no connection between MMR and autism or bowel disease.
- MMR vaccine does not contain thiomersal (mercury).

## Are there side effects?

- Serious side effects are rare.
- Side-effects of the vaccine are usually mild and importantly, they are milder than the potentially serious consequences of having measles.
- The measles part of the vaccine starts to work 6 to 10 days after immunisation.
- Your child may have a fever, develop a measles-like rash and go off their food.
- About one in every 1,000 immunised children may have a fit caused by the fever. This is called a febrile convulsion. The rate of febrile convulsions caused by getting measles is much higher at one in every 200 children.
- Fewer than one child in a million develops encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) after receiving the MMR vaccine. However, if a child who hasn't been immunised catches measles, the chance is much higher - between one and 1,000.

**The only thing that can stop you or your child catching measles is getting immunised.**

**If you suspect you or your child is sick with measles phone your GP or Healthline on 0800 611 116.**

**Auckland Regional Public Health Service**

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