



MMMR

It's never too late

Protecting Scotland's
children against measles,
mumps and rubella.

IN SCOTLAND TODAY, AROUND 30,000 CHILDREN AGED 2-6 YEARS OLD ARE ESTIMATED NOT TO BE PROTECTED AGAINST MEASLES...

MMR

Catch Up

Over the last 6 years, the number of children in Scotland having the MMR vaccine has fallen, and despite small increases in vaccine uptake over the past year, the number of children vaccinated with MMR is still lower than in 1999. This means that there are now many children who are not protected against measles, mumps and rubella (German measles).

There have already been outbreaks of measles in England, and particularly in London, in the last three years. Outbreaks could also occur in Scotland unless more children are protected. If your child is not protected then they could be at risk. If more children are protected then these outbreaks are less likely.



...THE RECOMMENDED WAY TO PROTECT YOUR CHILD IS THROUGH THE MMR VACCINATION, THE COMBINED VACCINE FOR MEASLES, MUMPS AND RUBELLA. THIS LEAFLET TELLS YOU MORE.

How many doses are needed?

All children should have two doses of MMR to protect them before they start school.

The first dose of MMR (MMR1) should be given when they are around 13 months old. If you miss this first dose, there is an opportunity to catch up at any point after 13 months.

The second dose of MMR (MMR2) should be given to your child before they start school. If they have not had their first or second dose by the time they go to school, there is a chance to catch up and protect them – it's never too late.

I am not sure if my child has had MMR vaccine before. What should I do?

You can check in your child's health record (red book) to see if it has been recorded there. If it hasn't, you can contact your practice nurse, health visitor or GP, as they may have a record.

If you have any doubt then your child should have MMR. They will come to no harm by having an extra dose.

My child has had single vaccines. What should I do?

Children who have had the single measles, mumps and rubella vaccines should also have the MMR. This is because there is no evidence that some of the single vaccines that have been used give such good protection as the combined MMR vaccine.

So what happens now?

If your child needs to catch up on one or both of the MMR doses, you should make an appointment with your practice nurse, health visitor or GP.



MMR

It's never too late

THE DISEASES

Measles

Measles is caused by a very infectious virus. Nearly everyone who catches it will have a high fever, a rash and be unwell. Children usually spend about five days in bed and may be off school for ten days. Adults are likely to be ill for longer. It is not possible to tell who will be seriously affected by measles. The complications of measles affect one in every 15 children. Complications include ear, chest and upper airway infections, diarrhoea, and fits, and (rarely) encephalitis (swelling of the brain) and brain damage. In very serious cases measles kills. Even healthy children die from measles.

How is measles spread?

Measles is one of the most infectious diseases known.

A cough or a sneeze can spread the measles virus over a wide area. Because it's so infectious, the chances are your child will get measles if he or she is not protected.



What is mumps?

Mumps is caused by a virus which causes a fever, a headache and painful swollen glands in the face neck and jaw. It can result in viral meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain), swelling of the testicles in males and the ovaries in females. Rarely, it can cause encephalitis or permanent deafness. Mumps lasts about seven to ten days.

How is mumps spread?

Mumps is spread in the same way as measles. It is about as infectious as flu.





What is rubella?

Rubella (German measles) is a disease caused by a virus. In children it is usually mild and may go unnoticed. It causes a short-lived rash, swollen glands and a sore throat. Rubella is very serious for unborn babies. It can seriously damage their sight, hearing, heart and brain. Rubella infection in the first three months of pregnancy causes damage in the unborn baby in up to nine out of ten cases. This condition is called congenital rubella syndrome (CRS). In many cases pregnant women catch rubella from their own, or their friends' children

How is rubella spread?

Rubella is spread in the same way as measles or mumps. It is about as infectious as flu.

MMR

It's never too late

THE VACCINE

What is the MMR vaccine?

The MMR vaccine contains weakened versions of live measles, mumps and rubella viruses. Because the viruses are weakened, people who have recently had the vaccine cannot infect other people.

How is the vaccine given?

The vaccine is injected into the muscle of the upper arm.

How effective is the MMR vaccine?

The MMR vaccine is highly effective and it had been responsible for almost wiping out the three diseases since it was introduced in 1988.

What are the side effects of the vaccine?

The three different viruses in the vaccine act at different times and may produce the following side effects:

- Six to ten days after the immunisation, some children may become feverish (this happens to about one in ten children). Some develop a measles-like rash and go off their food as the measles part of the vaccine starts to work.

- About one in every 1000 immunised children may have a fit caused by the fever. This is called a 'febrile convulsion' which most children come through unaffected. However, if a child has not been immunised and gets measles, they are five times more likely to have a fit.
- Rarely, children may get mumps-like symptoms (fever and swollen glands) about three weeks after their immunisation as the mumps part of the vaccine starts to work.
- Children may (very rarely) get a rash of small bruise-like spots in the six weeks after the vaccination. This is usually caused by the measles or rubella parts of the vaccine. If you see spots like these, take your child to the doctor to be checked. He or she will tell you how to deal with the problem and protect your child in the future.
- Fewer than one child in a million is reported to have encephalitis (infection of the brain) after the MMR vaccine. There is very little evidence that it is the vaccine that causes encephalitis. However, if a child catches measles the chance of developing encephalitis is between one in 200 and one in 5000.



Does MMR cause autism?

No. The speculation over a link between the MMR vaccine and autism started in 1998 when some scientists published a paper on 12 autistic children who also had bowel problems. Although the scientists stated clearly that there was no proven link between autism and the MMR vaccine, the resulting publicity gave the impression that there was a link.

The number of children being diagnosed with autistic spectrum disorders (conditions related to autism) has been increasing for many years. Some people took this as an indication that the increase was caused by the MMR vaccine.

There has not been a single study that has shown a risk of MMR causing autism. But, there have been many studies that cannot find a link. The weight of scientific evidence strongly indicates that MMR does not cause autism.

For more information, please refer to the MMR Discussion Pack, found on www.healthscotland.com/immunisation/mmr/ or speak to your GP, health visitor or practice nurse.



THERE HAS NOT BEEN A SINGLE STUDY THAT HAS SHOWN A RISK OF MMR CAUSING AUTISM

Are there any reasons my child shouldn't have the MMR?

There are very few children who cannot be immunised. The most important reasons are:

- your child had an anaphylactic reaction (see below) after a previous dose of MMR vaccine or
- if your child's immune system is suppressed (for example, because they are undergoing treatment for a serious condition such as a transplant or cancer), in these cases the doctor or practice nurse should get advice from a child health specialist.

If you missed the appointment for your child's MMR vaccination, you can get another appointment at your surgery or clinic.

Allergies

Even a child with an anaphylactic reaction (rashes on face and body, a swollen mouth and throat, problems with breathing and shock) to egg can have the MMR vaccine. In this situation, tell your doctor or school nurse – they can make special arrangements to give your child the vaccine.



Where can I get more information about MMR?

Visit www.healthscotland.com/immunisation/mmr/ for the MMR Discussion Pack, speak to your health visitor, doctor, or practice nurse, or phone NHS Helpline on 0800 22 44 88.

This leaflet is available in alternative languages and formats. Please contact Health Scotland or your local NHS Board for further details.

Published on behalf of the Scottish Executive by NHS Health Scotland. Adapted, with permission, from material published by Department of Health publications.

© NHS Health Scotland, 2006.

ISBN: 1-84485-338-1

Photography: © www.johnbirdsall.co.uk

healthyliving

NHS
Health
Scotland

2296 3/2006