



UK Health  
Security  
Agency

# Measles

Communications toolkit for UKHSA  
stakeholders

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# Introduction

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is working with partners in the NHS, local authorities and national government to protect people from measles.

This toolkit contains background information, social media assets and suggested copy, resources for health professionals, and other useful information.

The information provided is correct as of July 2025.

For further information about our national communications please contact:

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## About measles

Measles is one of the most highly infectious diseases. Measles spreads very easily among those who are unvaccinated.

Measles can be a very unpleasant illness. In some children it can be very serious and lead to hospitalisation – and in rare cases tragically can cause death. People in certain risk groups including babies and young children, pregnant women, and people with weakened immune systems, are at increased risk of complications from measles.

Symptoms include a runny nose, cough, high fever, sore red watery eyes and a blotchy rash. The rash looks brown or red on white skin. It may be harder to see on brown and black skin.

Having two doses of the Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR) vaccine is the best way to protect your child and help prevent measles spreading, especially to those most vulnerable. Two doses of the MMR vaccine give you excellent lifelong protection. If you or your child have missed out, contact your GP surgery to catch up as soon as possible.

There has been a resurgence of measles in England and around the world in recent years. Most of the cases in England have been in children under the age of 10 years with many outbreaks linked to nurseries and schools.

Uptake of the routine childhood vaccinations, including the MMR vaccine is the lowest it has been in a decade and is well below the 95% uptake needed to protect the population and prevent outbreaks. This is giving this serious disease a chance to get a foothold in our communities. Achieving high vaccination coverage across the population is important as it also indirectly helps protect very young infants (under one) and other vulnerable groups.

From Autumn 2023 to summer 2024, England experienced the biggest outbreak of measles since 2012, particularly affecting children under the age of 10 years. Since the peak last year

cases have declined, but local outbreaks have continued and we are currently experiencing an increase in activity particularly in London and the North West Regions.

## MMR vaccination programme

- Two doses of the Measles Mumps Rubella (MMR) vaccine are offered routinely to all children at 12 months and 3 years and 4 months and provide excellent lifelong protection from measles.
- As part of the [recently announced changes](#) to the routine childhood immunisation schedule, from 1 January 2026 the second dose of the MMR vaccine is being brought forward so that children born on or after 1 July 2024 will be offered their 2nd MMR dose when they attend for the new 18 month appointment. The aim of this change is to help improve MMR uptake at the population level.

## Key messages on MMR vaccine

- Measles is one of the most highly infectious diseases and spreads rapidly among those who are unvaccinated. It is a particularly nasty disease for any child and sadly for some children can be serious, leading to complications especially in young infants and those with a weakened immune system, and on rare occasions can tragically cause death.
- Measles is preventable with two doses of the MMR vaccine, but many thousands of children around the country are still not vaccinated and may be at risk.
- In recent years, uptake of the routine childhood vaccinations, including the MMR vaccine has fallen. Coverage in England is well below the 95% target set by the World Health Organization (WHO), which is necessary to prevent outbreaks and achieve and maintain measles elimination.
- Vaccines are our best line of defence against diseases like measles and help stop outbreaks occurring in the community.
- We are calling on all parents and guardians to make sure their children are up to date with their 2 MMR doses. To see if your child is up to date with their MMR vaccines, check your child's personal child health record (PCHR), known as the [red book](#), or contact your GP practice. People may also be able to check their vaccination status on the NHS App.
- Getting vaccinated means you are also helping protect others who can't have the vaccine, including infants under one year and people with weakened immune systems, who are at greater risk of serious illness and complications from measles. They rely on the rest of us getting the vaccine to protect them.

- It is never too late to catch up. The MMR vaccine is free on the NHS, whatever your age. If anyone has missed one or both doses of the MMR vaccine, contact your GP practice to book an appointment.

## NHS advice

There is [information on measles on the NHS website](#). This includes advice to parents and carers to check if their child has measles, including photos of the measles rash. The rash looks brown or red on white skin. It may be harder to see on brown and black skin.

Measles is a highly infectious viral illness, so anyone with symptoms is advised to stay at home and phone their GP or NHS 111 for advice, rather than visiting the surgery or A&E, to prevent the illness spreading further.

There is [information available from the NHS on the MMR vaccine](#).

## Parental confidence in vaccines

Evidence suggests there is high confidence in NHS vaccination programmes and parents trust the advice that they get from practice nurses, general practitioners, pharmacists and the NHS. For example, [UKHSA's annual survey of attitudes to vaccines](#) showed that most parents believe that childhood vaccines are safe (85% up from 84% in 2023) that they trust them (84% up from 82% in 2024) and they work (87% compared to 89% in 2024).

Healthcare professionals, in particular GPs, health visitors and nurses, continue to be the most trusted source of vaccine information. 76% of parents had seen or heard information about children's vaccines in the past year, predominantly from trusted sources including healthcare professionals and official NHS websites. Only 7% ranked the internet and 3% social media in their top three most trusted sources.

Most parents (79%) had already decided that their baby would have all the vaccines offered before they spoke to a health professional. However, following a discussion with a health professional more than half of these parents (53%) said they felt even more confident about their decision, and of those who had decided not to vaccinate 15% changed their mind in favour of vaccination.

The Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH) convened a commission of experts for 12 months to explore the decline in childhood vaccination in the UK. They published a report in July 2025 on [Vaccination in the UK: access, uptake, equity](#) which assessed how and why vaccine uptake has stalled or declined. Their findings highlight that while a lot of attention is given to the role of mis- and dis- information in driving vaccine hesitancy this did not explain the erosion in coverage seen over the last decade and that most of the barriers to vaccination experienced by communities were related to access to information and services and that these barriers were much worse from people from deprived areas and communities experiencing a range of health inequalities.

# Measles communications assets for raising awareness amongst the public

There is further information below which you may wish to use on your own channels:

- We have created a [variety of social media assets](#) to encourage people to check they and their children are up to date on their MMR vaccines.
- We have [an asset promoting the MMR vaccine without gelatine](#); a [video from Dr Naveed](#) explaining the importance of getting vaccinated ahead of any travel abroad and [similar video of Dr Naveed which includes the Muslim greeting 'Salaam Alaikum' at the start of the video](#).
- We have a [video from Nathan Askew](#), Chief Nurse at Alder Hey Children's Hospital, speaking about measles and the importance of the MMR vaccine.
- [Measles awareness posters](#) for use by the general public in public spaces and [posters for use during outbreaks](#).
- We have a blog '[what is measles and why is it so important we're all up to date with our MMR vaccine](#)'.
- We also have a [blog on immunisations](#) in which Vanessa Saliba, UKHSA's Consultant Epidemiologist for Immunisations, outlines the importance of protecting children through vaccination.
- Other publications and assets on MMR can be downloaded and ordered for free by healthcare professionals on the [health publications website](#). They are available in a number of languages including Romany, Romanian and Easy Read.
- UKHSA [resources on immunisation can be found on our website](#).
- The Department for Education published a blog aimed at parents and carers: '[What to do if you think your child has measles and when to keep them off school](#)'
- We have translated our [warn and inform letter](#) (to be used where it is necessary to contact a number of people who have been potentially exposed to a case of measles) into a number of community languages.
- We have also created an [easy-read](#) version that is also available online and for. These are available on our [national measles guidelines](#) GOV.UK page (scroll down to 'translations of warn and inform letters').

# Messaging on MMR vaccine ingredients

The issue of pork ingredients (known as ‘porcine gelatine’) in some vaccines has raised concerns among some groups.

There is limited awareness amongst some groups that there is an MMR vaccine available that **does not contain** pork products (known as ‘porcine gelatine’). It would be beneficial, particularly for healthcare professionals and community leaders, to consider providing this information more clearly in discussions about the MMR vaccine where there are concerns (for example on religious or ethical grounds) that may lead to reduced uptake.

For background, UKHSA and NHS England has a [leaflet which explains how and why porcine gelatine is used in vaccines](#), and the alternatives available. There is also [information available on the NHS website](#) on why vaccination is important.

## Suggested messages on MMR vaccine ingredients

- In the UK we have two types of MMR vaccine – MMR VaxPro® and Priorix®. Priorix® [does not contain any pork ingredients](#) and is as safe and effective as MMR VaxPro®. For both vaccines, a full two doses will provide protection against measles, mumps and rubella.
- You can request Priorix® from your GP. Parents can also make this request for children. Please note some GP practices may need to order this product in specially so it will be helpful to tell them your request before the appointment.





## Example social media assets









# Suggested post copy for social media assets



Measles		
Suggested post copy	Graphic	Alt text
<p>Measles spreads easily.</p> <p>Anyone who is not vaccinated can catch it.</p> <p>Measles can cause serious complications and can be fatal, so make sure you're up to date with #MMR vaccinations and ask your GP practice about catch up jabs if needed.</p>		<p>GIF. Measles can cause serious complications and can be fatal. Is your child protected? Vaccinate to protect your child against measles, mumps and rubella. Two doses of MMR give protection for life. Make sure your child is up to date: At 1 year. At 3 years 4 months. Contact your GP if your child has missed any vaccinations. Adults who missed out on the MMR in childhood can catch up at any time. Visit <a href="https://nhs.uk/MMR">nhs.uk/MMR</a></p>

		for more information.
<p>Measles can cause serious complications and tragically on rare occasions can be fatal</p> <p>But 2 doses of the #MMR vaccine can offer protection for life. Make sure you &amp; your loved ones are up to date with their jabs, and if not, contact your GP practice for a catch-up appointment.</p>		<p>GIF. Measles can cause serious complications and tragically on rare occasions can be fatal. Is your child protected? Vaccinate to protect your child against measles, mumps and rubella. Two doses of MMR give protection for life. Make sure your child is up to date: At 1 year. At 3 years 4 months. Contact your GP if your child has missed any vaccinations. Adults who missed out on the MMR in childhood can catch up at any time. Visit <a href="https://nhs.uk/MMR">nhs.uk/MMR</a> for more information.</p>
<p>If you're planning to travel abroad during the school holidays, make sure</p>		<p>Going away in the school</p>




<p>to check your child is up to date with their vaccinations, including the #MMR vaccine. Contact your GP practice to book any catch up jabs before you travel ✈️🚢🚆</p>	 <p>UK Health Security Agency NHS</p> <p><b>Going away in the school holidays?</b> Make sure your child is protected from measles.</p> <p><b>Two doses of the MMR vaccine provides lifelong protection</b> – if they're not up to date, contact your GP practice before you travel.</p>	<p>holidays? Make sure your child is protected from measles. Two doses of the MMR vaccine provides lifelong protection – if they're not up to date, contact your GP practice before you travel.</p>
<p>Measles can have serious consequences and tragically on rare occasions can be fatal. It is still common in many countries worldwide. Before you travel, make sure you &amp; your loved ones are up to date with #MMR vaccinations.</p>	 <p>UK Health Security Agency NHS</p> <p><b>Measles is still common in many countries worldwide.</b></p> <p>Make sure you and your loved ones are <b>up to date with MMR vaccinations</b> or contact your GP practice if you need to catch up before you travel.</p>	<p>Measles is still common in many countries worldwide. Make sure you and your loved ones are up to date with #MMR vaccinations or contact your GP practice if you need to catch up before you travel.</p>

<p>Getting lifelong protection against #measles is simple – you just need to have 2 doses of the #MMR vaccine. If you think you or a loved one isn't up to date, contact your GP practice to book a catch up appointment.</p>		<p>Measles: Are you protected? You need 2 doses of MMR for lifelong protection. If you haven't had both doses, you could be at risk. Contact your GP practice and book an appointment if you're not up to date.</p>
<p>Here's what you need to know about #measles, from the signs and symptoms to look for to what to do if you think you or your child has measles.</p> <p>More info:  <a href="https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles/">https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles/</a></p>		<p>GIF. Measles: know the symptoms</p> <p>Cold-like symptoms usually appear before a rash, including: High temperature, Runny/blocke d nose, Sneezing, A cough, Red, sore, watery eyes</p> <p>The measles rash. A rash usually appears a few days after the cold-like symptoms. The spots are sometimes</p>

		<p>raised and join together to form blotchy patches. They're not usually itchy. The rash looks brown or red on white skin. It may be harder to see on brown and black skin. Spots in the mouth. Small white spots may appear inside the cheeks and on the back of the lips a few days later. These spots usually last a few days. Call ahead. If you think you or your child have measles, call your GP surgery or NHS 111 first, before turning up at a healthcare setting. This will help to stop the virus spreading.</p>
<p>*Please note: The following graphics are meant to be used as part of a carousel, and not as standalone graphics*</p>		

<p><u>#Measles</u> can be a serious infection that can lead to complications, especially in young children &amp; those with weakened immune systems.</p> <p>We're reminding parents on what signs and symptoms to look out for and what to do if they think their child has measles.</p> <p>Measles spreads easily but it is preventable. Make sure you &amp; your loved ones are up to date with your <u>#MMR</u> jabs or catch up on any missed jabs.</p> <p>More info:  <a href="https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles/">https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles/</a></p>		<p>Measles: know the symptoms</p> <p>Cold-like symptoms usually appear before a rash, including: High temperature, Runny or blocked nose, Sneezing, A cough, Red, sore, watery eyes</p>
		<p>The measles rash. A rash usually appears a few days after the cold-like symptoms. The spots are sometimes raised and join together to form blotchy patches. They're not usually itchy. The rash looks brown or red on white skin. It may be harder to see</p>



		on brown and black skin.
	 <p>UK Health Security Agency NHS</p> <p><b>Spots in the mouth</b></p> <p>Small white spots may appear inside the cheeks and on the back of the lips a few days later. These spots usually last a few days.</p>	Spots in the mouth. Small white spots may appear inside the cheeks and on the back of the lips a few days later. These spots usually last a few days.
	 <p>UK Health Security Agency NHS</p> <p><b>Call ahead</b></p> <p>If you think you or your child have measles, call your GP surgery or NHS 111 first, before turning up at a healthcare setting. This will help to stop the virus spreading.</p>	Call ahead. If you think you or your child have measles, call your GP surgery or NHS 111 first, before turning up at a healthcare setting. This will help to stop the virus spreading.
<p><b>Option 1</b></p> <p>Vaccines offer the best protection against preventable illnesses, like #Measles. A version of the MMR vaccine is available without gelatine and is just as safe and effective. Ask your GP practice for more info.</p> <p><b>Option 2</b></p> <p>The #MMR vaccine is the best way to protect against #Measles, #Mumps and #Rubella – and a version without gelatine is available for those who need it. Ask your GP practice for more info.</p>	 <p>UK Health Security Agency NHS</p> <p><b>A version of the MMR is available without gelatine and is just as safe and effective</b></p> <p>Ask your GP practice for more info and book an appointment if you're not up to date.</p>	<p>A version of the MMR is available without gelatine and is just as safe and effective.</p> <p>Ask your GP practice for more info and book an appointment if</p>



<p><b>Option 3</b></p> <p>Measles spreads quickly and can be serious – but 2 doses of the #MMR vaccine offers protection for life.</p> <p>There's also a version of the MMR vaccine without gelatine that is just as safe and effective. Speak to your GP practice for more info or to book any catch-up appointments.</p>		<p>you're not up to date.</p>
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## Information for health professionals

We have a range of materials on the [Health Publications website](#) which aims to raise awareness of measles and the MMR vaccine that protects against it

- We have produced a leaflet [guide to the MMR vaccine](#). This guide should be given to parents of under vaccinated children of any age who have missed their doses. It is also suitable for young people, freshers who are about to start university and adults who are zero vaccinated.
- [We have a produced a poster](#) for health professionals to help them identify measles, what to do if they suspect measles and ensuring staff are fully vaccinated. Health professionals can download and order the poster for free via the health publications website.
- Training slide sets for health professionals:
  - [Measles: an update for maternity services](#).
  - [Measles: an update for paediatrics and A&E](#).
  - [Measles: an update for primary care](#).
  - [Measles, mumps and rubella \(MMR\) vaccination programme for immunisers](#).
- Other publications and assets on MMR for can be downloaded and ordered for free by healthcare professionals on the [Health Publications website](#). Many of these resources are available in translated community languages including: Afrikaans, Albanian, Arabic, Bengali, Brazilian Portuguese, Bulgarian, Cantonese, Chinese (simplified), Chinese (traditional), Estonian, Farsi, Greek, Gujarati, Hindi, Italian, Latvian,

Lithuanian, Panjabi, Pashto, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Romany, Russian, Somali, Spanish, Tagalog, Turkish, Twi, Ukrainian, Urdu, Yiddish and Yoruba.

- UKHSA [resources on immunisation can be found on our website](#).



## National guidelines

UKHSA has published [national measles guidelines](#). This guidance is for health professionals on how to deal with cases of suspected measles: what patient details to take, who to notify and assessing risk of disease spreading in close contacts.

This guidance for health professionals covers:

- how to decide if a suspected case of measles is 'likely' or 'unlikely'
- what patient details to take
- who to notify
- assessing risk of disease spreading in close contacts
- case management – what lab tests should be done and the importance of oral fluid testing on all suspected cases
- measles control – identifying vulnerable contacts and assessing their need for post-exposure prophylaxis

## Statistics

UKHSA and health partners publish various data and commentary:

- UKHSA publishes measles data monthly via these pages:
  - [Measles epidemiology 2023 to 2025 - GOV.UK](#)
  - [Measles | UKHSA data dashboard](#)
- UKHSA publishes [quarterly data and commentary on uptake/coverage achieved by the UK childhood immunisation programme](#). At the time of writing, this was last published on 1 July 2025 2 covering the period January to March 2025. Ju a childhood vaccination coverage dashboard, presented as a timeseries, at local authority, region and England level.

# Template UKHSA regional statement

Specialists from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) are working with NHS and local authority partners following confirmed cases of measles in [X location].

To help reduce the risk of further measles cases UKHSA is advising everyone to be alert to signs and symptoms and urge people to check their families are fully vaccinated against measles.

Measles is extremely infectious and sadly in some instances can have very serious, causing long term and life changing consequences. The best protection against measles is the MMR vaccination.

It is important that anyone who hasn't already had two doses of the MMR vaccine contacts their GP surgery for an appointment to get vaccinated.

The symptoms of measles can include cold-like symptoms, sore red eyes, a high temperature and a rash. The rash looks brown or red on white skin. It may be harder to see on brown and black skin. If you experience these symptoms seek medical attention but be sure to phone ahead before you visit your GP surgery or other healthcare setting, so arrangements can be made to prevent others from being infected.

## Notes to Editors

For further information about measles, please visit <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles/>

Information about the MMR vaccine can be found by visiting <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/mmr-vaccine/>

Latest measles data - <https://ukhsa-dashboard.data.gov.uk/vaccine-preventable-diseases/measles>

## Local Authority media handling

Any media queries relating to measles or MMR please liaise closely with your UKHSA regional contact.

## NHS media handling

NHS colleagues please liaise with your NHSE regional team.

# Template communications article for internal/external channels on MMR vaccine call

## Measles cases prompt MMR vaccine call

UKHSA has reported an increase in measles across the country and is encouraging people to check that they and their children have had two doses of the MMR vaccine.

The free MMR vaccine is a safe and effective way of protecting against measles, as well as mumps and rubella.

It's important for parents to take up the offer of MMR vaccination for their children when offered at 1 year of age and as a pre-school booster at three years, four months of age. If children and young adults have missed these vaccinations in the past, it's important to take up the vaccine now from GPs, particularly in light of the recent cases.

Check your child's Red Book to see if they've received MMR vaccinations as scheduled or check with your GP surgery if you're unsure. Most healthy adults will have developed some immunity to measles but can still receive two doses of the vaccine from their GP too.

Anyone with symptoms is also being advised to stay at home and phone their GP or NHS 111 for advice.

Measles symptoms to be aware of include:

- high fever
- sore, red, watery eyes
- coughing
- aching and feeling generally unwell
- a blotchy rash, which usually appears after the initial symptoms. The rash looks brown or red on white skin. It may be harder to see on brown and black skin.

For more information about measles, see the [nhs.uk website](https://www.nhs.uk).



# Q&A

## Measles

### I think I might/my child might have measles – what should I do?

- **Phone** your GP for advice, they may need to make arrangements for you to visit the surgery at the end of the day so that you avoid contact with people who are more vulnerable to the infection, such as young children and pregnant women.
- Avoid work or school for at least four days from when you first developed the measles rash.
- Make arrangements to have any outstanding doses of the vaccine once you have recovered. This will protect you against the other two infections which the MMR vaccine protects against, mumps and rubella.

## MMR

### How many doses of MMR vaccine does my child need?

Timely vaccination of your child with two doses of the MMR vaccine will give them the best protection. Some children who have only one dose of the vaccine might not be fully protected against one or more of the diseases. The first dose is given from one year and the second dose from 3 years 4 months (if pushed – MMR2 will change next January 2026, when it will be offered at a new immunisation appointment at 18 months for children born on or after 1 July 2024).

Thanks to immunisation, the number of cases of measles, mumps and rubella have been reduced. However these diseases have not gone away and there have been outbreaks of measles in recent years. Two doses of the MMR vaccine are routinely given across the whole of Europe as well as in the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

### Why are two doses of the MMR vaccine needed?

Two doses of the MMR vaccine will give your child the best long lasting protection against measles, mumps and rubella. The first dose of the MMR vaccine is given at the age of 12 months and the second dose at around 3 years and 4 months (if pushed: as above on new 18 month appointment)

Two doses gives 99% of children long lasting protection

### Why can't my under 1 have the vaccine? What parents of under-1s can be doing to reduce the chances of their child catching measles?

From 1 January 2026, children born on or after 1 July 2024 will be offered the second dose of MMR vaccine at a new 18 month vaccination appointment. Any children who miss this second dose of MMR can have it at their pre-school vaccination appointment at 3 year and 4 months, at the same time as their 4 in 1 booster.

Children born before 1 July 2024 who are still due their second MMR dose will continue to have it at their pre-school appointment at 3 years and 4 months.

The second MMR dose is clinically effective whether it is given at 18 months or at 3 years and 4 months. Both schedules provide excellent protection against these serious diseases. The second dose of the MMR vaccine is being brought forward for children born after 1 July 2024 in an attempt to improve uptake of the MMR vaccine and should help us achieve the World Health Organization 95% uptake target needed to prevent outbreaks in the community.

If you are unsure about which vaccines your child is due, please check their Red Book or speak to your GP practice or health visitor who can provide personalised advice about your child's immunisations.

### **I have heard the childhood immunisation schedule is changing – why does my child still have to wait for their second dose at 3 years and 4 months?**

From 1 January 2026, children born on or after 1 July 2024 will be offered the second dose of MMR vaccine at a new 18 month vaccination appointment. Any children who miss this second dose of MMR can have it at their pre-school vaccinations at 3 year and 4 months, at the same time as their 4 in 1 booster.

Children born before 1 July 2024 who are still due their second MMR dose will continue to have it at the pre-school appointment at 3 years and 4 months.

The second MMR dose is clinically effective whether given at 18 months or at 3 years and 4 months. Both schedules provide excellent protection against these serious diseases. The second dose of the MMR vaccine is being brought forward for children born after 1 July 2024 in an attempt to improve uptake of the MMR vaccine and should go some way to helping us achieve the WHO 95% target needed to prevent outbreaks in the community.

If you are unsure about which vaccines your child is due please check their Red Book or speak to your GP practice or health visitor who can provide personalised advice about your child's immunisations.

### **How can we protect those who are most vulnerable?**

Getting vaccinated means you are also helping protect others who can't have the vaccine, including infants under 1 year and those with weakened immune systems, who are at greater risk of serious illness and complications from measles, and tragically sometimes death.



Some individuals may have been fully vaccinated in the past but have since developed a medical condition and/or are receiving treatment, such as cancer therapy, that can wipe out their previous immunity, leaving them at much greater risk.

We all have our part to play in helping protect those who are more vulnerable by ensuring all children and family members are fully vaccinated and helping stop the spread of the disease to those at greatest risk. They rely on the rest of us getting the vaccine to protect them.

### **Can my child have MMR as single vaccine?**

Using single vaccines for the diseases would be experimental, and no country uses this approach. It's unclear how long a gap to leave between each vaccine, as there's limited evidence on giving all of these vaccines separately.

Single vaccines are less safe than MMR because they leave children vulnerable to dangerous diseases for longer, and potentially increases the risk of allergic reactions. Giving 6 separate doses at spaced out intervals would mean that, after the first injection, the child still has no immunity to the other 2 diseases.

No country recommends vaccination with the 3 separate vaccines. Some single vaccines are available in other European countries, where they may be used in special circumstances. For example, in France measles vaccine is used for nursery school children aged 9 to 12 months. These children usually have the MMR vaccine 6 months later.

### **Is the MMR necessary with such low cases of the disease?**

In the UK, childhood diseases such as measles are kept at bay by high immunisation rates. In recent years, due to a fall in vaccine uptake, we have seen a resurgence of measles in the UK. Around the world, millions of people a year die from infectious diseases with more than 5 million of these being children under the age of 5. Many of these deaths could be prevented by immunisation.

As more people travel abroad and more people come to visit this country, there is a risk that they will bring these diseases into the UK. The diseases may spread to people who haven't been immunised, or who are still too young to be immunised.

Immunisation protects your child and also helps protect your family and the whole community, especially those children who, for medical reasons, can't be immunised. Refer to [reasons why your baby should not be immunised for details](#).

### **How do we know that vaccines are safe?**

Before a vaccine is allowed to be used, its safety and effectiveness have to be thoroughly tested. After they have been licensed, the safety of vaccines continues to be monitored. All routine vaccines in the NHS programme have been used in millions of children worldwide and have an excellent safety record.

All health authorities worldwide agree that immunisation is the safest way to protect our children's health.

## Will there be any side effects from the vaccines?

Any side effects that occur are usually mild and short lived. Your child may get a little redness, swelling or tenderness where the injection was given that will disappear on its own. Fever can be expected after any vaccination. There is advice for parents on what to expect after vaccination here: [What to expect after vaccinations - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/what-to-expect-after-vaccinations)

## I'm worried that my child may have allergies. Can they be vaccinated?

Very rarely, children can have an allergic reaction soon after immunisation. This reaction may be a rash or itching affecting part or all of the body. The doctor or nurse giving the vaccine will know how to treat this. It does not mean that your child should stop having immunisations.

- **Anaphylactic reaction**

Even more rarely, children can have a severe reaction, within a few minutes of the immunisation, which causes breathing difficulties and can cause the child to collapse. This is called an anaphylactic reaction. Anaphylactic reactions to vaccines are extremely rare, [with only 1 anaphylactic reaction in about a million immunisations](#).

An anaphylactic reaction is a severe and immediate allergic reaction that needs urgent medical attention. The people who give immunisations are trained to deal with anaphylactic reactions and most children recover completely with treatment.

## What if my child has an underlying health condition?

There are very few reasons why babies cannot be immunised. Vaccines should not be given to babies who have had a confirmed anaphylactic reaction to either a previous dose of the vaccine, or to any contents of that vaccine.

- **Immunosuppressed children**

In general, children who are 'immunosuppressed' should not receive certain live vaccines. Children who are immunosuppressed include those whose immune system does not work properly because they are undergoing treatment for a serious condition such as a transplant or cancer, or who have any condition which affects the immune system, such as severe primary immunodeficiency. Primary immunodeficiencies are very rare diseases that mean you are more likely to catch infections. They are usually caused by a faulty gene and are diagnosed soon after birth.

If this applies to your child, you must tell your doctor, practice nurse or health visitor before the immunisation. These children can be best protected by ensuring those around them, for example their siblings, are fully vaccinated.

They will need to get specialist advice on using live vaccines such as MMR, rotavirus vaccine and Bacillus Calmette-Guérin vaccine (BCG).

There are no other reasons why vaccines should definitely not be given.

## Are there any other reasons why my child should not receive the MMR?

The MMR is a live attenuated vaccine (that is, they contain viruses that have been weakened). Children who are 'immunosuppressed' may not be able to receive live vaccines. Children who are immunosuppressed include those:

- whose immune system is suppressed because they are undergoing treatment for a serious condition such as a transplant or cancer, or
- who have any condition which affects the immune system, such as severe primary immunodeficiency. If this applies to your child, you must tell your doctor, practice nurse or health visitor before the immunisation. They will get specialist advice.

### **Does the MMR vaccine contain pork products?**

In the UK we have two types of MMR vaccine – MMR VaxPro® and Priorix®. Priorix® [does not contain any pork ingredients](#) and is as safe and effective as MMR VaxPro®. For both vaccines, a full two doses will provide protection against measles, mumps and rubella.

You can request Priorix® from your GP. Parents can also make this request for children. Please note some GP practices may need to order this product in specially so it will be helpful to tell them your request before the appointment.

### **Is MMR linked to autism?**

No – there is absolutely no evidence of this. Some years ago, there were stories suggesting a link between the MMR vaccine and autism, which were false and have since been widely discredited. All medical authorities worldwide agree that no such link exists.

# About the UK Health Security Agency

UKHSA is responsible for protecting every member of every community from the impact of infectious diseases, chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear incidents and other health threats. We provide intellectual, scientific and operational leadership at national and local level, as well as on the global stage, to make the nation health secure.

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Version 4.0

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Published: 16 July 2025



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