

Fact Sheet

MMR VACCINE

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

- The MMR vaccine is an injection that immunises people against measles, mumps and rubella.
- Although most people recover from measles, some can get very sick and the disease can lead to hospitalisation and, in rare cases, death.
- It is recommended that:
 - Parents/caregivers of children should check that their child is fully immunised with MMR.
 - If you do not know if you or your child has received the recommended doses of MMR, or whether you or they have definitely had measles in the past, call your GP to discuss.

Any NZ resident, over 1 year of age, and who has not had two documented doses of measles vaccine in the past is eligible for free MMR vaccination.

How effective is the MMR vaccine?

- There are some people who cannot receive the MMR vaccine. However, 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 gelatine, or the antibiotic neomycin, should not receive 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 and there is no increased risk from receiving 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 develop a fever, a measles-like rash or go off their food.
- About one in every 3000 immunised children may have a fit caused by the fever. This is called a febrile convulsion and can also happen in younger children with a fever due to any cause. The rate of febrile convulsions caused by getting the measles disease itself is much higher at one in every 200 children.
- Fewer than one child in a million develops encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) after the MMR vaccine. However, if a child who hasn't been immunised catches measles, the chance is much higher at one in 1000.

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

For more information on immunisation, please call the Immunisation Advisory Centre free on 0800 IMMUNE (0800 466 863) or visit their website <http://www.immune.org.nz>