



Health and Community Services

PROTECTION FROM MEASLES, MUMPS AND RUBELLA (MMR)

What is Measles?

Measles is a serious childhood disease. It begins like a common cold with fever, cough, runny nose and watery eyes. A red blotchy rash appears 3-7 days later and fades away after 10 days. Measles can cause serious complications such as pneumonia, and ear infections, which may result in deafness, encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) and may cause brain damage. Death from measles occurs once in every 3,000 cases.

What is Mumps?

Mumps is a common childhood disease causing swelling of the salivary glands, the cheeks swell and chewing and swallowing become difficult. It may also be accompanied by fever, headache, and earache. Mumps is a mild disease but can sometimes cause meningitis encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) and deafness. One out of every 20 females may develop inflammation of the ovaries. These complications can be very painful but usually do not cause sterility.

What is Rubella (German measles)?

Rubella is a mild disease with slight fever, rash and swelling of the glands in the back of the neck lasting about 3 days. Adult females may have pain and swelling of the joints lasting 1 or 2 weeks. However, if a pregnant woman gets rubella the unborn child can be seriously affected. The child may be born with heart problems, deafness or blindness, if exposed to rubella during the first 3 months of pregnancy.

Vaccination against Measles, Mumps, and Rubella

Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) can be prevented by receiving two doses of vaccine given at least one month apart. The first dose is usually given at 12 months as measles, mumps, rubella and varicella (chickenpox) vaccine (MMRV). The second dose is given as MMR at 18 months. Currently MMR may also be given to older children and adults who have not had two doses of the vaccine and have not had the disease.

Reactions or Side Effects from MMR Vaccine

Some people may get a reaction in the first day or two, a sore arm or a fever. One to three weeks later other reactions may occur. These reactions are usually very mild and include fever, slight rash and swelling of the glands in the back of the neck, and may last a few days. Pain and swelling of the joints may sometimes occur and continue for 2 to 3 days. Other more serious side effects are very rare such as swelling of the salivary glands, pain or numbness and tingling in the hands and feet. Some more serious effects, convulsions and encephalitis are extremely rare. The risk of encephalitis from the measles disease is 1,000 times greater than the risk from the vaccine.

Some people should not receive the MMR vaccine. If you/your child has any of the following please check with the doctor or public/community health nurse:

- Sick with fever or infection
- Allergic reaction (hives, swelling of the face, lips or throat; wheezing; shock; anaphylaxis) to neomycin or to a previous dose of measles vaccine
- Cancer, leukemia, lymphomas
- Receiving treatment with steroids
- Recently received immune globulin (IG) or other blood products
- Pregnancy

For additional information and services
contact your Regional Health Authority
listed in the white pages of your
telephone book.