

Measles Protection

Important information for you, your family and community

It's true that after having measles, most people are protected for life. But to develop that protection—also called immunity—you must first become sick with measles. That means taking on the health risks that come with the disease. You might get very sick, and you can spread measles to others. The measles vaccine protects you *without* the serious risks of the disease.

How well does the MMR vaccine work?

93 out of 100

people are protected after 1 dose

97 out of 100

people are protected after 2 doses

No vaccine works in every person. A small number of people who have been vaccinated may still get measles after spending a lot of time close to someone who has measles. When this does happen, the illness is usually milder. The sick person is also less likely to spread measles to others.

Is natural immunity better?

After having measles, protection usually lasts for life. The risk comes before recovery: a person may become seriously ill, and they may spread measles to others. There is no way to know in advance who will have a serious complication. Vaccination is the **safer way to become protected** without the risks that come from illness.

How do I know if I am protected from measles?

There are several ways to know if you are protected:

1. You have received the recommended number of MMR vaccines for your age and risk.
2. A laboratory test showed that you had measles or a measles vaccine at some point in your life.
3. You were born before 1957.

Remembering that you or your child “had measles” is not the same as laboratory proof. Other illnesses can also cause fever and a rash.

Why preventing measles matters

Measles is not just a rash. Among people who get measles in the United States:

About 1 in 5

unvaccinated people are hospitalized

About 1 in 20

children develop pneumonia

About 1 in 1,000

children develop brain swelling

About 1 to 3 in 1,000

children die from complications

Can the MMR vaccine cause or spread measles?

No. MMR contains weakened vaccine viruses that train the immune system. They do not spread from one person to another. A mild fever or rash can occur 7 to 12 days after vaccination; this usually does not mean the person is contagious.

Who should get medical advice before MMR?

Talk with a healthcare provider before MMR if you are pregnant, have a severely weakened immune system, had a serious reaction to a prior dose, or recently received blood products.

What should I do now?

- ▶ **Check your records.** Look for written MMR dates or laboratory evidence of immunity.
- ▶ **Ask if you are unsure.** Your healthcare provider or local public health agency can help you choose MMR or, when appropriate, a blood test.
- ▶ **Act quickly after an exposure.** Call public health right away so you do not miss the window for medicine that may help.
- ▶ **Call ahead if you feel sick.** Stay home and call before going to a clinic or hospital.

Questions or possible exposure?

Local public health agency: _____

Phone: _____ After-hours: _____

For more information, visit: [CDC measles questions](https://cdc.gov/measles/about/questions.html) (https://cdc.gov/measles/about/questions.html)