

Measles, mumps, rubella and chickenpox (varicella)

Immunisation information

OFFICIAL

The National Immunisation Program provides free combined MMRV vaccine for protection against measles, mumps, rubella and chickenpox (varicella) to children at 18 months of age.

Measles

Measles is a serious and highly contagious viral disease that causes fever, runny nose, cough and sore red eyes, followed by a rash.

About 1 in 15 children with measles will develop pneumonia and 1 in 1000 will develop inflammation of the brain (encephalitis). For every 10 children with measles encephalitis, 1 will die and many will have permanent brain damage.

A rare condition called SSPE (subacute sclerosing panencephalitis) can develop several years after a measles infection. SSPE rapidly destroys the brain and is always fatal.

Measles can be caught through coughs and sneezes from an infected person before that person realises they are sick.

Mumps

Mumps causes fever, headache and inflammation of the salivary glands. 1 in 5000 children will develop inflammation of the brain, but permanent side effects are rare. About 1 in 5 adolescent or adult males who contract mumps will develop a painful inflammation and swelling of the testicles. Occasionally mumps causes infertility and permanent deafness.

Mumps can be caught through coughs and sneezes from an infected person before that person realises they are sick.

Rubella

Rubella causes swollen glands, joint pain and a rash on the face and neck that lasts 2 to 3 days. 1 in 3000 people will develop a low platelet count causing bruising or bleeding. 1 in 6000 will develop inflammation of the brain.

Rubella is most dangerous when a woman catches it in the first 20 weeks of pregnancy. This can result in serious abnormalities in the newborn baby. Deafness, blindness, heart defects and intellectual disabilities can occur.

Rubella can be caught through coughs and sneezes from an infected person before that person realises they are sick.

Rubella is highly contagious and the best way to protect expectant mothers and their babies is to ensure that women are immunised before they become pregnant.

Chickenpox

Chickenpox (varicella) is a highly contagious infection that causes a rash of red spots initially, which become blisters within hours. The spots usually appear on the chest, face and other parts of the body. Most people infected with chickenpox have a fever and feel unwell and may experience severe itching.

Sometimes chickenpox will develop into more severe illness such as bacterial skin infections resulting in scarring, pneumonia or inflammation of the brain and even death in all ages. Adults who become infected with chickenpox generally experience more severe symptoms.

Chickenpox infection during pregnancy can result in serious abnormalities in the newborn baby. Infection in the mother around delivery time can result in severe infection in the newborn baby.

Chickenpox is spread through coughs and sneezes and through direct contact with the fluid in the blisters of the rash.

Research shows that two doses of chickenpox vaccine in children provide increased protection and reduce the risk of a mild dose of chickenpox occurring at a later time. The government funds one free dose of chickenpox vaccine in the MMRV vaccine. A second dose of chickenpox vaccine can be purchased on prescription.

Measles, mumps, rubella and chickenpox (MMRV) vaccine

The National Immunisation Program provides a free combined MMRV vaccine for protection against measles, mumps, rubella and chickenpox to children at 18 months of age.

However, MMRV is not recommended for the first dose in children under four years due to an increased risk of febrile convulsions in this age group.

Children have their first dose of measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine at 12 months of age without the chickenpox (varicella) vaccine.

It is important to know that it is safe for children with egg allergies to receive the MMR and MMRV vaccines.

The MMRV vaccine is not recommended for people aged 14 years and over and so people in this age range can receive the MMR vaccine and the chickenpox vaccine separately if required.

Pre-immunisation checklist

Before immunisation, it is important that you tell your immunisation provider if your child:

- ☐ is unwell (has a temperature over 38.5 °C)
- ☐ has had a serious reaction to any vaccine
- ☐ has had a serious reaction to any component of a vaccine
- ☐ has had a severe allergy to anything
- ☐ has had a 'live' vaccine in the last month
- ☐ has had recent immunoglobulin or blood transfusion treatment
- ☐ has a disease or is having treatment that causes low immunity.

Possible side effects of MMRV vaccine

Side effects are generally mild and well tolerated and are much less frequent than the complications of the disease. Side effects from MMRV vaccine usually occur seven to 10 days after vaccination and last 1 to 2 days.

Side effects between seven and 10 days after vaccination

- Pain, redness or swelling at the injection site
- A lump at the injection site that may last many weeks or months
- Fever (can be more than 39 °C)
- Faint red rash (not infectious)
- Head cold symptoms
- Swelling of salivary glands.

Side effects between 5 and 26 days after vaccination

- A mild rash like a chickenpox rash.

Managing side effects after immunisation

- Give your children extra fluids to drink and do not overdress children if they are hot.
- Although routine use of paracetamol after vaccination is not recommended, if fever is present paracetamol can be given. Check the label for the correct dose or speak with your pharmacist - especially when giving paracetamol to children.
- Sometimes a small, hard lump at the injection site may persist for some weeks or months. This should not be of concern and requires no treatment.

Rare side effects

There is a very small risk of a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to any vaccine. This is why you are advised to stay at the clinic or medical

surgery for at least 15 minutes following vaccination, in case further treatment is required.

For significant or unexpected side effects following immunisation see your doctor or go directly to a hospital.

You can call the Victorian vaccine safety service (SAEFVIC) on 1300 882 924 (option 1). The line is attended between 10:00 am to 4:30 pm and you can leave a message at all other times. This service does not give immediate emergency management for a side effect.

For advice contact:

- your doctor
- your local council immunisation service.

Further information

www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au

www.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation

Translating and interpreting service, call 131 450

To receive this document in another format, [email the Immunisation Unit <immunisation@health.vic.gov.au>](mailto:immunisation@health.vic.gov.au).

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