

Protecting Against Measles- Vaccination

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Patients

NOTE: This FAQ covers vaccination topics. See “Measles – The Basics” for general information.

How can I prevent getting measles?

The best way to prevent measles and its spread is to get vaccinated. The measles vaccine is very effective and provides lifelong immunity for 93% of people after one dose, and 97% of people after 2 doses. The measles vaccine is part of the MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine, which prevents all 3 viral infections. It is always a good idea to avoid contact with those who show signs of contagious illness and to wash your hands or use hand sanitizers regularly.

How do I know if I need the vaccine?

Measles vaccination is part of the MMR vaccine series and is routinely recommended for all children. Chances are, if you were born in the U.S. and did not opt out of vaccination, you likely received the vaccine. If you're not sure whether you have been vaccinated, first check your immunization records to see if you received the vaccine, and if so how many doses. If you do not have these records, your doctor can order a blood test to check your immunity against measles. If the test shows you're not immune, talk to your doctor about getting vaccinated.

You do not need the MMR vaccine if you:

- Had 1 dose of MMR and are not in high risk settings (child care, colleges, hospitals)
- Had 2 doses of MMR and are in high risk settings (child care, colleges, hospitals)
- Had ever been pregnant and had pre-natal care because rubella immunity is routinely checked in the US (rubella immunity in the US is obtained by the MMR vaccine). Check with your obstetrician.
- Were born before 1957
- Had blood tests showing you are immune to measles

How long does it take to become immune?

Protection usually begins within days of receiving the measles vaccine, but full protection occurs after 2-3 weeks.

Could I still get measles even though I am fully vaccinated?

Very few people—about 3 out of 100—who get two doses of measles vaccine will still get measles if exposed to the virus. But fully vaccinated people who get measles will have milder illness and are also less likely to spread the disease to other people, including people who can't get vaccinated because they are too young or have weakened immune systems.