

Measles: Protecting Children

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Patients

What do parents need to know about protecting children against measles?

Children are at higher risk for complications if they get measles, especially among those less than 5 years of age. Measles can result in serious complications, such as pneumonia, brain infection (encephalitis), and even death. The very 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.

When do children usually get the measles vaccine?

The measles vaccine is part of the MMR (measles, mumps, and rubella) vaccine, which prevents all 3 viral infections. Routine vaccination with MMR begins with the first dose at 12-15 months and the second dose at 4-6 years of age. Protection usually begins within days of receiving the measles vaccine, but full protection occurs after 2-3 weeks.

Why are children at higher risk for getting measles?

Because the routine vaccination schedule does not begin until 12 months and the second dose is not usually given until 4 years later, there may be times when infants and children may not be fully protected against measles, depending on their age.

My child is older than 12 months and got one vaccine dose. Can he/she get their second dose sooner?

Yes. The 2nd dose can be administered as early as 4 weeks after the first dose.

My child is less than 12 months old. Can I have him/her vaccinated earlier?

If travelling internationally, then infants 6-11 months old should receive one dose before departure and will need to be revaccinated with two doses starting at 12-15 months per routine recommendations above. Currently, there is no recommendation to routinely vaccinate 6-11 month old infants who do not travel.

My child is less than 6 months old. Can I have her vaccinated earlier?

Measles vaccine is **not** recommended for infants less than 6 months old. Avoid contact with others who may be sick and avoid exposure to public spaces. If mothers are vaccinated, then their protective antibodies (proteins in blood that fights infection) are transferred to babies when they are born and during breastfeeding, which provides some protection until vaccination can occur.

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Could my child still get measles even though he/she is fully vaccinated?

Very rarely. In addition, if fully vaccinated people get measles, they will have milder illness, are much less likely to have serious complications, 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.

Is there a link between vaccines and autism?

No – there is no link between vaccines and autism. Large-scale studies by the Institute of Medicine and the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) have repeatedly shown that there is no link between receiving vaccines and the development of autism. Meanwhile, there is clear and ample evidence that getting sick from measles can cause serious complications. For more information on this topic, go to: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccinesafety/concerns/autism.html>

Where can I go to learn up to date information about the current measles situation?

More information can be found here:

- OCHCA <http://www.ochealthinfo.com/phs/about/dcepi/epi/dip/prevention/measles>
- The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/index.html>