

Measles: Protecting Pregnant Women

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Patients

What do pregnant mothers need to know about measles?

Pregnant women who are not immune to measles are at higher risk for serious complications if they get measles. Measles during pregnancy can also affect your baby and is associated with risk for miscarriage, premature labor, stillbirth, and low birth weight. The good news is that if you have been vaccinated, you are considered immune and unlikely to get sick with measles. While the risk of vaccinated patients getting measles is low, is it not zero. It is always wise to avoid exposure to others who are sick while you are pregnant.

How do I know if I am immune to measles?

Measles vaccination is part of the MMR vaccine series and is routinely recommended for children. Chances are, if you were born in the US and did not opt out of vaccination, you likely received the vaccine. The first dose is usually given at age 12 - 15 months and the second dose at age 4 - 6 years old. 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.

People are considered protected if:

- 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

Can I get the MMR vaccine during pregnancy?

No. Pregnant women cannot receive MMR. If you are pregnant and do not have evidence of immunity, it is important that you avoid contact with others who may be sick. If you think you may have been exposed to someone with measles, report to your physician immediately. You may need special medication to avoid getting sick with measles.

I am not pregnant yet but trying to conceive – what should I do about measles?

The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) recommends that all women of childbearing age check their vaccination status before they get pregnant. Women should avoid getting pregnant for at least 1 month after getting MMR vaccine.