

Measles – Early or Accelerated Vaccination

Michigan is currently seeing a record number of measles cases. The best way to prevent measles is to be vaccinated against it. The vaccine is given in combination with the mumps and rubella vaccines, known as MMR vaccine.

Children should get 2 doses of the MMR vaccine:

- 1st dose: 12 through 15 months of age
- 2nd dose: 4 through 6 years of age

The measles vaccine is highly effective and very safe. A single dose of measles vaccine protects about 95 out of 100 the children who received it. After two doses, almost all children are immune.

Because of the outbreak, parents may be interested in an **early** or **accelerated** vaccination schedule. Accelerated means that the child will receive the second dose of the vaccine earlier than the standard schedule.

How early can my child be vaccinated?

Children who are travelling internationally, or live in an area where an active measles outbreak is occurring should be vaccinated against measles. They may receive the first dose of MMR between 6 and 11 months of age. This can provide temporary protection from measles infection, but will not give permanent immunity. Children who receive MMR vaccination early will receive 3 doses of MMR altogether:

- 1st dose: 6 through 11 months of age
- 2nd dose: 12 through 15 months of age
- 3rd dose: 4 through 6 years of age

What is an accelerated MMR schedule?

Children who have already received 1 dose of MMR (between 12 and 15 months old), may receive the second dose earlier than 4 years old, as long as it is 28 days after the first dose.

Does it make sense to vaccinate my child early or on an accelerated schedule?

The decision whether to vaccinate early or accelerate vaccination for a child should be a joint decision between the parent and the healthcare provider. The parent should consider the child's risk of exposure, risks and benefits of vaccination, and personal preferences.

There are some children, such as those with weakened immune systems, who should not receive the measles vaccine. Your provider will ensure that your child is eligible to receive the MMR vaccine.

What are the risks of having a vaccine reaction?

The MMR vaccine is considered to be very safe. Vaccines, like any medicine, can have side effects. Most people who get MMR vaccine do not have any serious problems with it. Getting MMR vaccine is much safer than getting measles, mumps or rubella.

Occasional side effects of the MMR vaccine include:

- Sore arm from the shot
- Fever
- Mild rash
- Temporary pain and stiffness in the joints. This mostly occurs in teenagers or adult women who did not already have immunity to the rubella component of the vaccine.

Rare side effects include:

- Swelling in the cheeks or neck.
- Temporary low platelet count, which can cause a bleeding disorder that usually goes away without treatment and is not life threatening.

MMR vaccine has a very small risk of febrile seizures (seizures or jerking caused by fever). Febrile seizures following MMR are rare and do not cause any long-term effects.

Extremely rarely, a person may have a serious allergic reaction to MMR vaccine. Anyone who has ever had a life-threatening allergic reaction to the antibiotic neomycin, or any other component of MMR vaccine, should not get the vaccine.

The risks of measles infection far outweigh any potential side effects from vaccination. You cannot get measles infection from the vaccine.

Where can I learn more?

- Michigan Department of Health and Human Services
<http://Michigan.gov/MeaslesOutbreak>
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
<https://www.cdc.gov/measles/>
- Washtenaw County Health Department.
<https://www.washtenaw.org/health>

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