

MMR Vaccine

Measles, Mumps and Rubella

The MMR vaccine is part of the routine Yukon Immunization Schedule for children and adults.

What are measles, mumps and rubella?

- **Measles** is a very contagious viral infection. It spreads through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Measles can cause fever, cough, runny nose, red eyes and a rash. It can lead to serious complications, including pneumonia, swelling of the brain and death, particularly in young children and people with weakened immune systems.
- **Mumps** is a viral infection that primarily affects the salivary glands. It can cause painful swelling near the jaw and cheeks. It can also lead to complications, including meningitis, hearing loss, swelling of the testicles or ovaries and, in rare cases, brain inflammation.
- **Rubella** is a viral infection spread through respiratory droplets. It usually causes a mild fever, rash and swollen lymph nodes. Rubella can be very serious during pregnancy because it can result in miscarriage, stillbirth or serious birth defects known as congenital rubella syndrome, which includes heart defects, deafness and developmental delays.

What is the MMR vaccine?

The MMR vaccine is a live, weakened combined vaccine that protects against three serious and highly contagious viral infections: measles, mumps and rubella. The vaccine works by stimulating the body's immune system to produce antibodies against these diseases.

It is given as a two-dose series. The first dose is routinely offered to children at 12 months of age and the second dose is given before kindergarten, usually between four and six years of age.

Who should get the vaccine?

- Children who are 12 months of age and children between four and six years of age.
- Older children and adults who missed their childhood doses.

Most individuals born before 1970 are already immune due to past exposure and do not need the vaccine.

Who should not get the vaccine?

Do not get the MMR vaccine if you:

- have had a serious allergic reaction to a previous dose or an ingredient of the vaccine; or
- are pregnant.

If you have a very weak immune system, for example, from receiving cancer treatment, speak with your health care provider before booking an appointment.

Possible reactions to the vaccine

Common reactions following immunization are usually mild and resolve within one to two days. These may include redness, tenderness or swelling at the injection site, as well as a mild fever, headache, fatigue or digestive upset. The MMR vaccine can also cause a mild rash. This can occur anytime within six weeks after immunization and can resemble:

- a measles-like rash, which is blotchy and red; or
- a rubella-like rash, which is red with slightly raised bumps.

To help manage side effects, you can apply a cold, damp cloth to the injection site. A pain reliever, such as acetaminophen, may also help.

Speak with your health care provider if symptoms are severe or last longer than 48 hours.

Why are MMR vaccines recommended?

Two doses of the MMR vaccine are almost 100 per cent effective at preventing these three diseases. The vaccine is safe and is one of the most effective ways to prevent infections. Getting vaccinated helps protect you and the people around you.

After you get the vaccine

- Stay at the clinic for 15 minutes after getting the vaccine.
- Severe allergic reactions are very rare. Clinic staff are trained to treat them right away.
- If you have symptoms of a severe reaction after leaving the clinic, call 911 or your local emergency number right away.