

MEASLES VACCINE 101

The immune response caused by vaccination is a safer, low-dose immune response that primes the body to fight off the virus.



Key Facts



The Measles, Mumps, and Rubella vaccine contains weakened versions of the viruses. It is often called the **MMR vaccine**.



The MMR vaccine works with your immune system to fight off measles infection.



Measles infection can cause fever, cough, runny nose, and red, watery eyes, commonly followed by a rash that covers the whole body. It can also lead to seizures, ear infections, diarrhea, and pneumonia. Rarely, measles can cause brain damage or death.



The MMR vaccine may cause a sore arm from the injection site, fever, and mild rash. Most people who get the measles vaccine do not have serious problems. **The MMR vaccine is safer than measles infection.**



A healthy immune system will respond to the weakened version of the live virus in the vaccine safely and not get the full-blown measles illness. A natural measles infection will give you **lifelong immunity** to measles. So will the vaccine. The difference is the price paid for that immunity.



Most of the time, you do not know when you are exposed to a bacteria or virus. However, you do with a vaccine. It is a controlled exposure that **minimizes** the risk of illness.



Your immune system treats vaccines and natural infections exactly the same way. It sees a germ, attacks it, and gets rid of it. Then, your body saves a picture of that germ in its “memory bank.” If that same germ ever shows up again, your body is ready to fight it off instantly.



Vaccines give your body **safe target** practice. They train your immune system to fight off the germ without you ever having to face the dangers of the actual illness.



Pregnant women **should not** get the MMR vaccine because there could be a risk for the developing baby and mother. Check your immunity or receive the vaccine before trying to conceive. You can also get the MMR vaccine after you give birth, so you are fully protected for future pregnancies. It is safe to receive the MMR vaccine while breastfeeding.

There are three forms of immunity:

1 ACTIVE IMMUNIZATION



When you get a shot like the MMR vaccine, it triggers your body to build its own defense system. This is called “active protection.” It doesn’t just protect you right now—it also creates memory cells. These cells remember the germ so your body can fight it off if you ever run into it again.

2 PASSIVE IMMUNIZATION



Sometimes, your body gets “borrowed” protection. This happens when you receive germ-fighting tools (called antibodies) that were made somewhere else. For example, a mother passes these protectors to her baby through breast milk. Because your own body didn’t make them, this protection doesn’t last forever and won’t create long-term memory cells.

3 COMMUNITY IMMUNITY



This happens when you are protected by the people around you. It is often called **herd immunity** or **cocooning**. If most people in a community are vaccinated, a germ can’t spread easily. This forms a protective shield around anyone who can’t get the shot.



Vaccination is the safest and most effective way to protect yourself and your community against measles.