



Is your child protected against measles?

Children need **two doses** of the MMR vaccine to be fully protected against measles.



 HSE
National
Immunisation Office

Make sure children and young people are up to date with their MMR. Your child needs two doses of the MMR vaccine to be fully protected
#KeepUpToDate

NIO Campaign Pack

February 2024



#KeepUpToDate – Your child needs two doses of the MMR vaccine to be fully protected.

Background

The HSE is urging parents to make sure children and young people are up to date with their MMR vaccine due to a rise in cases in parts of the UK and Europe. The MMR vaccine protects against measles, mumps and rubella, we advise people to be vigilant and take necessary steps to prevent the spread of this highly contagious virus.

Measles can be unpleasant and is a potentially serious and highly infectious disease that can spread easily through respiratory droplets. To safeguard our communities, the HSE recommends people to now ensure they are up to date with MMR vaccine to prevent spread of the disease if cases occur in Ireland.

What are we asking people to do?

1. Check vaccination status

Ensure that you and your family members are up-to-date with the measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine. Contact your GP to check if your child's vaccinations are up-to-date. Vaccination is the most effective way to prevent measles and protect against its complications. Two doses are recommended to be considered fully vaccinated. The 1st dose is given when your child is 12 months of age. It is important to get the first MMR on time at 12 months and not delay because measles is more severe in young children. The second dose is due when your child is in junior infants. If you or your family members have missed an MMR vaccine, it is strongly advised to schedule a vaccination appointment with your GP.

With the mid-term break coming up, it is particularly important that anyone travelling to the UK ensures they have received the right number of MMR vaccines for their age.

2. Practice good hygiene

Maintain proper hand hygiene by washing hands frequently with soap and water. Avoid touching your face, especially your eyes, nose, and mouth, to reduce the risk of infection.

3. Monitor for Symptoms

Stay vigilant for symptoms of measles. These include:

- high fever
- cough
- runny nose
- characteristic red rash.

If you or a family member develop these symptoms, or have been in contact with someone with measles, stay at home and contact your doctor by phone for advice and inform healthcare providers of any recent travel history.

If you think someone in your family has measles, phone your doctor immediately for advice. Keep the child or adult at home and refrain from visitors coming to your home unless they know they are protected against measles (they have had two doses of MMR vaccine).

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Frequently asked questions

What is Measles?

Measles is a very infectious illness that spreads very easily. Both children and adults can become sick with measles.

What are the signs and symptoms of measles?

The symptoms of measles include:

- Cold-like symptoms such as aches and pains, a runny nose, sneezing and a cough
 - Sore, red eyes that may be sensitive to light
 - A temperature of 38 degrees Celsius or above (fever), which may reach around 40 degrees Celsius
 - Small greyish-white spots in your mouth
 - Loss of appetite
 - Tiredness, irritability and a general lack of energy
 - Rash – usually appears on head and neck first and spread to rest of the body
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- Measles can cause chest infections, fits, ear infections, swelling of the brain and brain damage.
 - Measles can be very serious and can cause deafness, blindness and even death.
 - Measles is worse for children under one year of age, pregnant women and people with poor immunity.
 - Children can get measles if they have not had the MMR (Measles-Mumps-Rubella) vaccine. Further information can be found here <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/measles/>

What can I do to protect my family from measles?

Every parent wants to keep their children safe. Getting the MMR vaccine is the best way to prevent it and protect your child. MMR vaccine protects against measles, mumps and rubella (German measles).

Measles is spreading in parts of the UK, in Europe and other regions worldwide. If you are travelling abroad please ensure everyone is up to date with MMR vaccine.

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Frequently asked questions

When is the measles vaccine offered to children?

MMR vaccine is offered to babies at 12 months of age. This vaccine is available for free from GP practices. It is important it is to get the first MMR on time at 12 months and not delay because measles is more severe in young children. Children should get a second dose when they are in Junior infants at 4-5 years of age. This is usually given at school by the HSE's school immunisation team for free. (In Sligo, Leitrim and Donegal, the second MMR dose is given by GPs) Two doses of MMR vaccine are required to give the best protection.

If I missed a dose of the MMR vaccine, how can I catch up?

It's never too late to catch up, contact your local doctor to make an appointment. The vaccine is free from your local doctor up until your child is 10 years old, after that your child can still get the vaccine, but there might be a charge.

What if I am unsure if I have had the vaccine?

If you are unsure if you or your child has had the MMR vaccine, you can check with your doctor.

I have questions about the MMR, who should I talk to?

If you have any questions be sure to talk to your doctor or Public Health Nurse — no matter what the question is. The MMR vaccine is safe, we know there is a lot of misinformation about autism and vaccinations but research has shown that vaccines do not cause autism. Research has also found that the rates of autism were the same in groups of children who received the vaccine, compared to those who did not receive the vaccine.

What can I do if I think someone in my family has measles?

Phone your doctor immediately for advice. Keep the child or adult at home and stop visitors coming to your home unless they know they are protected against measles (they have had two doses of MMR vaccine).

What can I do if my family has been in contact with someone with measles?

If this is the case let your doctor know immediately and get medical advice.

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Who is this campaign pack for?

Parents and guardians
Health and care professionals
Partner organisations

Key messages

Reminder: Getting your child vaccinated is the best way to protect them from serious illness. In Ireland, all the recommended childhood vaccines are free.

Call-to-action: Make sure your child has their MMR vaccines on-time. If your child hasn't had their MMR vaccines, contact your doctor. **They can catch-up with the vaccines they have missed.**

The MMR vaccine catch-up programme is for some children who did not get the MMR vaccine when it was offered to them when they were 12 months old, or age 4-5 years old in junior infants.

It is important it is to get the first MMR on time at 12 months and not delay because measles is more severe in young children. You can contact your GP surgery and ask if they are offering MMR catch-up vaccinations at this time. If they are offering MMR catch-up vaccinations, you can book your child in with their GP to get the vaccine. The vaccine is free.

If you or a family member develop symptoms, or have been in contact with someone with measles, **stay at home and contact your doctor by phone** for advice and inform healthcare providers of any recent travel history.

If you think someone in your family has measles, phone your doctor immediately for advice. Keep the child or adult at home and refrain from visitors coming to your home unless they know they are protected against measles (they have had two doses of MMR vaccine).

Protect your child and their future by making sure they get their recommended vaccines.

For more information visit www.immunisation.ie

See the HSE website for more information about the signs and symptoms, treatment and risks of measles <https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/measles>

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1. Support the campaign

Please share the social media assets with your own message or post it to your social pages tagging @HSEImm

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/hseimm/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/hseimm>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/hse-national-immunisation-office>

2. Share our social media messages

You can support the campaign by reposting and sharing posts from the NIO. You can also share some of the social media messages below.



Measles cases are rising right now in Europe. Your child needs two doses of the MMR vaccine to be fully protected. It is the best way to protect our little ones from measles: <https://bitly.ws/3aNKk>
#KeepUpToDate | #VaccinesWork

Tá líon na gcásanna den bhruitíneach san Eoraip ag méadú. S'ían vacsaín MMR an tslí is fearr le stop a chur le scaipeadh na bruitíní agus le bheith cinnte go bhfuil ár bpáistí cosanta:

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For Health care professionals

Measles is on the list of infectious diseases requiring immediate preliminary notification by telephone to a Medical Officer of Health. This legislative requirement means that medical practitioners should urgently notify suspected clinical cases of measles. This enables immediate control measures to be put in place.

Find out more here <https://www.hpsc.ie/news/title-24037-en.html>



1. The HSE Health Protection Surveillance Centre has been [notified of the death of a person with confirmed measles](#), which took place in a hospital in the Dublin and Midlands Health Region. This is the first confirmed measles case notified in Ireland in 2024. (7 February 2024)
2. MMR uptake in Ireland is suboptimal and less than the 95% target set by the WHO. Nationally, uptake has declined to below 90% since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic (early 2020).
3. For dose 1 of MMR offered to children at 12 months of age through GP practices uptake in Quarter 2 2023 was 89.2% nationally. For dose 2 of MMR vaccine offered when children are in Junior Infants uptake in 2021/2022 was 87.5%.
4. Recent [HPSC reports](#) show we are not reaching the 95% of vaccination needed to achieve community immunity and protection from these vaccine preventable diseases. In addition, the HSE reminder comes amid data showing uptake of the childhood vaccination across Europe remains below the 95% target recommended by the World Health Organization.
5. To date in 2024, there have been no confirmed cases of measles reported in Ireland. HPSC's weekly infectious disease [report](#) includes measles cases under investigation. These cases are tested and de-notified if they are found not to be measles.
6. Anyone born in Ireland before 1978 is likely to have had measles infection

#ProtectOurFuture – make sure your child is vaccinated with their school vaccines

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Posters

Is your child protected against measles?

"The MMR vaccine is the best way to protect your child from measles. Two doses of the vaccine gives your child the best protection."

- Ann McDonnell
Traveller Primary Health Care Worker

Information about your child's MMR vaccine

SCAN ME

Pixel Point
HSE Social Partner
HSE National Immunisation Office

[Download poster with Ann McDonnell on why the MMR vaccine is important to protect your child against measles.](#)

Factsheets

[Download measles factsheets in English, Czech, Romanian, Slovak](#)

Videos

[Watch Ann McDonnell, Traveller Primary Health Care Worker explain why it is important to keep your children's vaccines up to date.](#)

[Watch Dr Chantal Migone, Consultant in Public Health Medicine, explain that vaccines including the MMR vaccine are safe and how your children can get the vaccine.](#)

Short videos on the importance of your child's school vaccines from key Public Health subject-matter-experts.

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Sample Social Media Messaging

Is your child protected against measles?

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An bhfuil do pháiste cosanta ar an mbruitíneach?

Ní mór **dhá dháileog** na vacsaíne MMR a thabhairt do do pháiste ionas go mbeidh siad cosanta go hiomlán ar an mbruitíneach.



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Recommendations when developing social media messages

When choosing imagery remember

- No needles or vials, and health staff must be bare below the elbow with no gloves, white coats, stethoscopes, or ties.
- Imagery should match HSE child safety advice, avoiding unsafe situations for example children unsupervised.
- To ensure images showing a measles rash have come from an accredited source like the CDC <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/symptoms/photos.html>

When developing content remember

- 1 in 5 posts must be in the Irish language
- To share the facts – we do not recommend myth busting. UNICEF and Yale Institute of Global Health have developed a Vaccine Messaging Guide <https://www.unicef.org/media/93661/file/Vaccinemessagingguide.pdf>

Campaign contacts

NIO Communications Manager: Anita Ghafoor Butt
anita.butt@hse.ie 0873501587

HPSC Communications Manager: Kirsty Mackenzie
kirsty.mackenzie@hpsc.ie

Thanks for supporting the campaign.