

MMR Vaccination Program for Health Care Workers

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is mumps?

Mumps is an infection of the salivary glands that is caused by a virus. Symptoms may include fever, swollen and tender glands at the angle of the jaw, headache and muscle aches. Most people recover from the illness but mumps can be serious. Those who become very ill have encephalitis (an infection of the brain), meningitis (a swelling of the covering of the brain), arthritis or deafness. One in three men may get painful, swollen testicles. Although very rare, these men may end up with infertility.

2. Why the concern now?

Nova Scotia is experiencing the largest outbreak of mumps seen in recent years. This outbreak has brought many issues to the fore, including the under-immunization against measles, mumps and rubella in Nova Scotians born between 1970 and 1992.

HCW who are under-immunized are often required to be put off work during an outbreak. This results in a reduction in the number of available staff to deliver health care services.

This is the third outbreak of mumps in Nova Scotia since 2005. Providing the vaccine now will help prevent further outbreaks and subsequent disruptions to the healthcare system.

3. Why do I need the MMR vaccine?

The MMR vaccine provides protection not only against mumps but measles and rubella as well. Protection of health care workers is especially important in the context of their ability to transmit these infections to vulnerable groups. The vaccine will protect both you and your patients.

4. Why is the MMR vaccine recommended for all HCW regardless of age?

MMR can be given to individuals of any age. Regardless of when you were born, this is an opportunity to ensure you are protected against all three diseases and not just mumps.

5. I received MMR in the past. Do I need to get revaccinated?

Within this first phase of targeting health care workers, the only HCWs who do not need to receive this vaccine are those who:

- Have appropriate documentation proving they had two doses of MMR vaccine,
- Have appropriate documentation proving they had all three of measles, mumps and rubella infection, or
- Have a contraindication to MMR vaccine.

6. Do I need this vaccine if I had mumps already as a child?

Often a history of mumps is not that helpful in deciding whether to vaccinate. Although mumps is of less concern than measles and rubella, the mumps outbreak is an opportunity to check MMR status and to ensure you are adequately protected from these diseases as well. You would not require this vaccine if you have documentation from your doctor stating that you had all three diseases.

7. How is the vaccine administered?

The vaccine is administered into the subcutaneous tissue of the upper triceps area of the arm.

8. What is the recommended dose of the MMR vaccine?

The standard dose is 0.5mL.

9. Can MMR vaccine be given at the same time as other vaccines?

The vaccine can be given concurrently with other vaccines, administered using separate syringes and at different sites. When administered with other live vaccines, such as varicella vaccine, the MMR vaccine should be given at the same time or separated by a minimum 4 week interval.

10. What are the contraindications and precautions related to this vaccine?

- Pregnant women or women who think they may be pregnant should not receive the MMR vaccine. Women who receive this vaccine should **not** become pregnant for at least one month following immunization.
- Administration of MMR vaccine should be deferred if there is any severe acute illness. Immunization should not be deferred because of a minor acute illness, with or without fever.
- Individuals who have had an anaphylactic reaction after receiving a dose of measles vaccine should not receive MMR.
- Individuals who have had an anaphylactic reaction to neomycin or who have a documented gelatin allergy should not receive MMR.
- Individuals who have cancer, leukemia, lymphoma, or HIV infection should not receive MMR.
- Individuals who are receiving chemotherapy or other immunosuppressive drugs should not receive MMR.
- Individuals who received immune globulin (IG) during the past three months should not receive MMR.

11. Is the MMR vaccine safe for pregnant women?

Although there is no known risk from MMR vaccine administered during pregnancy, it should not be given to pregnant women. Women who receive this vaccine should not become pregnant for at least one month following immunization.

12. Is MMR vaccine safe for breastfeeding mothers?

Breastfeeding is not a contraindication to MMR vaccine administration.

13. Can I receive the vaccine if I have an allergy to eggs?

Recent studies show that individuals with an egg allergy can be safely vaccinated with MMR vaccine without special precautions.

14. What are the adverse reactions to the MMR vaccine?

- Mild soreness or redness at the injection site that lasts for 1-2 days.
- A fever with or without a rash may occur 7-12 days after receiving MMR.
- Mild pain or stiffness in the joints lasting 3 days or more may occur 1-3 weeks after receiving the vaccine. This occurs in about 25 adults out of 100. Women are more affected than men and it may occur in as many as 40 women out of 100. Rarely the pain and stiffness can last for months, and can come and go.
- The rubella component of the vaccine can cause pain and swelling of the joints. This can occur 1-3 weeks after receiving the vaccine.

15. Should I report an adverse reaction?

Please report any side effects that concern you to your Occupational Health Department or to your doctor. Prompt reporting of adverse events following immunization is essential to guarantee vaccine safety, allow for timely corrective action when needed, and to keep information regarding vaccine risk-benefit and contraindications up to date.

16. Is there a limit to the number of MMR vaccination an individual can receive?

There is no limit to the number of MMR vaccinations an individual can receive. The benefit of ensuring protection outweighs the risk of an additional dose of MMR.

17. Do I need to get blood work (serology) done to check my immune status before being vaccinated?

- If you have documentation from your doctor stating that you have had all three diseases, you do not require this vaccine.
- If you have documentation proving that you have received two doses of MMR in the past, you do not require this vaccine.
- If you have only had one dose of MMR in the past, we know that two doses provide better protection and there is no need to check your serology before getting vaccinated.

18. What does a “documented history of MMR vaccination” mean?

Proof of vaccination from a physician or public health.

19. How long does it take to develop MMR immunity?

Protective antibodies appear in the blood within 12 days of vaccination and reach peak concentration within 21-28 days.

20. I’ve recently received MMR (in the last two weeks) and now I have been in close contact with a case of mumps. What do I do?

You should immediately report to your Occupational Health or Infection Control (OH/IC) Department, who will decide whether you are able to return to work.

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