

INFORMATION ON PROTECTION

AGAINST MEASLES

Getting measles: is it really that bad?

Measles is a highly contagious virus that causes a fever and leads to a protracted illness, and in rare cases also to serious complications, such as inflammation of the lungs or the brain. It can also result in life-long impairments or even death. A measles infection weakens the immune system and may mean that a person is susceptible to further infections for a period of several months or even years. Children under the age of 5, pregnant women and persons with weakened immune systems are much more likely to be affected by complications.

My child is not/I am not at risk of having a serious case of measles. Why should we have the vaccination?

Measles viruses are highly contagious and, if you or your child become infected, you may pass on the infection to other people who cannot (yet) be protected by the vaccination – young babies, people with a congenital or acquired immune deficiency, unprotected pregnant women, and others. 95 percent of the population need to have been vaccinated in order to prevent the virus from spreading across the population. People who cannot be vaccinated but who are at high risk of complications can then also be protected.

Having the vaccination not only means you are protecting your child or yourself, but also your fellow citizens!

Why is it mandatory to be vaccinated against measles?

In Germany, we have been vaccinating against measles for more than 40 years. Since then, the number of cases of measles has fallen significantly. In some years, however, there are still a lot of infections and there have been cases of serious complications and even deaths as a result of catching measles. Furthermore, measles viruses are carried from Germany to other countries and may lead to outbreaks of measles in countries with lower vaccination rates and healthcare systems that do not function as well as ours. Across the world, there are still more than 200,000 deaths every year as a result of catching measles. Along with Germany, all of the other 52 member states of the WHO European Region are pursuing the goal of complete elimination of measles through their vaccination programmes. This has already been achieved with small pox.

What vaccines are used?

A combination vaccine is used against measles which also offers protection against rubella (German measles) and mumps. Some vaccines also give additional protection against chicken pox. Even people who have already had mumps or rubella can be vaccinated with this vaccine. The vaccine is well tolerated. In a few cases, it may lead to side effects such as pain at the site of the injection, fever or similar symptoms. Around 5 percent of those vaccinated will suffer from so-called "vaccine measles" – around 7-10 days after receiving the vaccine, a skin rash forms for 1-3 days, but the person is not infectious.

After having had two vaccinations against measles, it is generally assumed that a person has lifelong protection against this illness.

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Why is there so much false information about the measles vaccine?

Many people are afraid that being vaccinated against measles could lead to autism or to an inflammation of the brain. These claims have been disproved by many scientific studies.

The Robert Koch Institute has provided answers to many of the most common questions:

https://www.rki.de/DE/Content/Infekt/Impfen/Bedeutung/Schutzimpfungen_20_Einwaende.html

I don't have any paperwork to show my/my child's vaccination status. I have/my child has already been vaccinated once or twice against measles. What should I do?

You can nevertheless get vaccinated/have your child vaccinated. With the MMR vaccine, there is no increased risk from having an additional vaccination. If your body is already immune to the vaccine viruses, then the side effects of the vaccine are also less pronounced.

Alternatively, you can ask your general practitioner to do a blood test to check for antibodies against measles (titer determination). You will have to pay for this.

Where can I get advice or get the vaccine?

You can get further information and can also get the vaccine

- from your paediatrician or general practitioner's practice
- during the vaccine consulting sessions at public health offices



<https://www.hamburg.de/impfen/8602828/impfen-und-beratung/>

My child has/I have in the meantime had the vaccine. What should we do now?

If you or your child have (in the meantime) had the vaccine against measles, please send evidence that you or your child have been vaccinated to the public health office responsible for your case, or make an appointment there to present the evidence that the vaccination has been done. The contact details for the public health office responsible for your case can be found in the enclosed letter.

It is not sufficient to present evidence that the vaccination has been done to your childcare centre, school or similar. The public health office needs to be informed directly so that you are not sent any further requests to get the measles vaccination.

I don't want to have/I don't want my child to have the vaccine. What will happen now?

Within the next 6 weeks, you must go to the public health office and either

- present evidence of having received the measles vaccination
- or present a medical certificate which states that you or your child cannot be given the vaccine.

If you fail to do this, you will receive a further letter and you may have to pay a fine.