

Measles, Mumps, Rubella and Varicella (MMRV) Vaccine (Priorix-Tetra™)

Vaccines (or needles) are the best way to protect against some very serious infections. The National Advisory Committee on Immunization (NACI) and the Canadian Paediatric Society recommend routine immunization with measles, mumps, rubella and varicella vaccine.

Why get the MMRV vaccine?

Measles, mumps, rubella, and varicella (chickenpox) are diseases caused by viruses. These viruses are spread easily through the air by sneezing and coughing. Chickenpox can also be spread through contact with fluid from the blisters that appear when infected. Antibiotics do not treat these diseases.

Almost all children will have life-long protection against measles, mumps, rubella and varicella after they receive two doses of vaccine against these diseases.

Occasionally, infection still occurs but the disease is milder with fewer complications.

What is measles (red measles)?

Measles is a serious viral infection that spreads very easily from person to person. It is passed from an infected person to others through coughing, sneezing, and even talking. It causes high fever, cough, rash, runny nose and watery eyes, and can last for one to two weeks. There is no specific treatment.

Measles can lead to ear infections or pneumonia in one of every 10 children. About one out of every 1,000 children who get measles will develop encephalitis – an inflammation of the brain. This often causes brain damage and developmental delays. About one in 3,000 people who get measles will die. In very rare cases, measles is complicated by a disease called SSPE (sub acute sclerosing panencephalitis), a very severe and always-fatal brain infection.

Before the measles vaccine was widely used, almost all children got measles. Now, because of the routine use of vaccine, very few Canadian children get measles. SSPE has almost completely disappeared.

What is mumps?

Mumps is a viral infection that is spread from person to person through coughing, sneezing and even talking. There is no treatment for mumps.

Mumps can cause fever, headaches and swelling of the cheeks and jaw. The swelling is caused by an infection of the salivary glands. Mumps can also cause meningitis – an infection of the fluid and lining covering the brain and spinal cord. About one in every 10 people with mumps gets meningitis. Fortunately, mumps meningitis is usually mild.

Mumps can cause deafness in some children. Mumps can cause very painful, swollen testicles in about one out of four teenage boys or adult men. On rare occasions, this may cause sterility. Mumps can also cause a painful swelling of the ovaries in one out of 20 women.

What is rubella (German measles)?

Rubella is a viral infection that spreads easily by coughing, sneezing, or talking with an infected person. There is no treatment for rubella.

Rubella is usually a mild illness in children, but can be quite serious in women. Rubella may cause fever, sore throat, swollen glands in the neck and a rash on the face and neck. As many as three out of five teenage girls and women with rubella get aches and pains and swelling of the joints. Rubella can lead to chronic arthritis. It can also cause temporary blood clotting problems.

Rubella is very dangerous in pregnant women. If a woman gets rubella in the early part of pregnancy, it is very likely that her baby will have congenital defects, or even die. The most common problems are blindness, deafness, heart defects, and developmental delays.

What is chickenpox?

Chickenpox (or varicella) is an illness caused by a virus. People with chickenpox have a blister-like rash, itching, slight fever and fatigue. Chickenpox is very easy to catch. Before widespread use of the chickenpox

vaccine, there were 350,000 new cases of chickenpox a year in Canada. Although the one-dose schedule of chickenpox vaccine has reduced disease and hospitalization, some children are still at risk of being infected after one dose. Two doses of chickenpox vaccine further protect against the disease and reduce hospitalizations and complications.

Chickenpox can cause problems such as scarring of the skin, skin or bone infections, and pneumonia. Serious illness, such as inflammation of the brain (encephalitis) can occur, but it is rare. If a pregnant woman gets chickenpox, the unborn baby may develop birth defects or serious complications, including death.

In many people, the virus can become active again later in life and cause a painful rash called shingles.

Who should receive this vaccine?

Children born on or after January 1, 2000, are eligible to receive two doses of publicly-funded vaccine against measles, mumps, rubella and varicella (if no previous chickenpox infection after age one).

If your child is born on or after January 1, 2000, and is four to eleven years of age he or she may be eligible to receive the MMRV vaccine.

The first dose of measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine is usually given at one year of age. The first dose of varicella vaccine is usually given at 15 months of age. Normally, the combined MMRV vaccine is given at four to six years of age as a booster dose of measles, mumps, rubella and varicella vaccine. The MMRV vaccine reduces the number of injections for children.

Who should not receive the vaccine?

Children should not get the vaccine if they have:

- Allergies to the vaccine or any component of the vaccine;
- Previously experienced an allergic reaction to any measles, mumps, rubella and/or varicella vaccine

Please consult with your health care provider if your child has:

- a weakened immune system or take medications that suppress the immune system

- a personal or family history of seizures
- previously had a severe allergic reaction to eggs, or anything that contains eggs
- received blood or blood products
- a moderate to severe infection

Is the MMRV vaccine safe?

Yes. As with most vaccines, side effects are usually mild and last for only a few days after getting the needle. Some common side effects include redness, swelling and tenderness in the area where the vaccine was given. Fever and/or a rash can occur four to 14 days after getting the vaccine. Severe reactions are rare.

When should I call my health care provider?

Serious side effects or allergic reactions can occur with any medication, including vaccines. See your doctor or go to the emergency room right away if your child shows any of the following symptoms within three days of getting the MMRV vaccine:

- high fever (over 40° C or 104° F)
- convulsions or seizures
- hives
- swelling of the face or mouth
- trouble breathing, hoarseness or wheezing
- other serious problems.

Your record of protection

Your health care provider will update your personal immunization record or give you a new one. Keep it in a safe place!

Who should I talk to if I have more questions?

If you have more questions, speak to your health care provider or call the Health Department at the number below.

For more information, please contact

Halton Region

Call 311 or 905-825-6000

Toll Free: 1-866-4HALTON (1-866-442-5866)

TTY: 905-827-9833

www.halton.ca