

## About Childhood Vaccinations

### Why Vaccines Matter

Vaccines **protect you and your child** from many serious and potentially deadly diseases. They also **help protect others** — especially babies too young to be vaccinated, or people who are too ill to have vaccines.



#### Vaccines Do:

- Help protect your child and community from serious and potentially deadly diseases
- Undergo **rigorous safety testing** before being used and continue to be **monitored for side effects** after approval
- Sometimes cause **mild, short-term side effects** (such as a sore arm or mild temperature for a few days)
- **Reduce or even eliminate** some diseases when enough people are vaccinated

#### Vaccines Do Not:

- They do not weaken the immune system – it is safe for children to have several vaccines at one time
- They do not contain mercury (thiomersal)
- They do not contain any harmful ingredients
- They do not cause autism – **there is no evidence linking the MMR, or any vaccine ingredients, to autism**
- They do not have to contain pork products – alternatives are always readily available for the two UK vaccines that do use porcine gelatine

### Be Aware of Anti-Vaccine Stories

Anti-vaccine misinformation spreads quickly online and offline. As parents, we all want the best for our children — that’s why it’s vital to get your information from **trusted sources**, such as:

- The **NHS**
- The **World Health Organization (WHO)**

#### Remember:

Social media stories are not always based on science. Following them could put your child at risk of serious illness.

#### Evidence shows:

Getting vaccinated is **far safer** than not being vaccinated. Children who miss vaccines are more likely to suffer serious illness if they catch these diseases — and if more people refuse vaccination, the risk to everyone increases.



## **The Facts: Measles in the UK**

- In **2024**, there were **2,911 cases** of measles in the UK
- **60.9%** of cases were in children aged **10 or younger**
- **44.8% (1,305 cases)** were in **London**  
**Enfield Borough** had **65 cases** — the **11th highest** in the country
- **Complications** occur in **10–20%** of cases



### **Common Complications Include:**



- Pneumonia
- Encephalitis (brain swelling, possible deafness or learning disabilities)
- Blindness
- Ear infections (1 in 10 cases)
- Severe diarrhoea and dehydration
- Subacute Sclerosing Panencephalitis (SSPE) — a rare but **fatal** brain disease

## **Vaccination is the best way to prevent measles and its serious complications.**

Yet, despite the MMR vaccine being readily available, the uptake in children up to 24 months of age has **decreased** to 88.9% in 2023-4 (which is the **lowest level since 2009-2010**)

### **True Stories**

#### **Renae's Story**

Renae Archer died aged 10 after complications from measles caught as a baby. Her mum Rebecca says has been campaigning to get their children vaccinated and says:

"If other people were vaccinated, Renae might not have got the measles in the first place. She was only five months old. It's really scary, until it happens to your family, you don't realise the significance of getting vaccinated."

"We just want people to open their eyes to someone that's actually been through it and not the nonsense that's being spread out on social media or on telly."

#### **Levi's Story**

In 2024, baby **Levi** nearly died from measles. His mum, Sophie, was hesitant about getting his MMR jab due to online misinformation, but after asking questions and checking legitimate sources of information, she felt reassured that vaccination was an important parental responsibility. Levi was booked in for his MMR but caught measles from an unvaccinated child just days before his appointment and became gravely unwell spending six days in hospital with severe sepsis. Thankfully Levi recovered and is now healthy, and Sophie uses her experience to encourage others to **trust the facts** and **get vaccinated**.

# MMRV Vaccination (Measles/Mumps/Rubella/Varicella)

From **1 January 2026**, the MMRV vaccine replaced the MMR vaccine in the childhood vaccination programme, offering protection against **chickenpox as well as measles, mumps and rubella**  
(see new schedule below)

**The MMRV vaccine has been safely used for over 10 years and is already part of the routine childhood vaccination schedule in several countries**

## Why does my child need to be protected against chickenpox as well as measles, mumps and rubella?

Although most cases of chickenpox are mild, some children may have a more serious illness and need to be admitted to hospital. In rare cases, children can develop serious complications, including chest infection, fits, and encephalitis (brain inflammation).

MMRV is a simple way to protect your child against measles, mumps, rubella and chickenpox.



### What if my child has already had chickenpox?

Even if your child has already had chickenpox, there are no safety concerns if a child gets the MMRV vaccine.

### Why do children need 2 doses of the MMRV?

Two doses are needed to ensure the best possible protection against measles, mumps, rubella and chickenpox. Some children may not develop enough protection from just one dose.

**Studies show it is safe to have several vaccinations at the same time and that the MMRV vaccine does not overload your child's immune system**

## Why can't I give my child individual doses of the vaccines that make up the MMRV?

Giving the vaccines separately means children remain vulnerable to catching these infections for a longer period of time. It also increases the chance that a dose might be missed.

### Are there any side effects from the MMRV vaccine?

These are no different from other vaccination side effects which are mild and short term – sore arm, fever, rash

### Is vaccination available for adults?

Yes. Anyone who has not received two doses of the MMR vaccine can contact their GP surgery for a catch-up vaccination (this is free and available on the NHS)

## MMRV Schedule

