A second dose of Measles, Mumps & Rubella vaccine
better protection for your child
Why is my child being called back for another MMR immunisation?

From 1 October 1996 all children having their pre-school immunisation boosters against diphtheria, tetanus and polio will also be offered a booster dose of measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine. But some children, born since 1 January 1990, will already have had their pre-school boosters and therefore will miss out on the offer of a booster MMR immunisation. According to our records your child is one of this group. So, to make sure your child doesn’t miss out on the best available protection, we are calling your child back to give the booster MMR immunisation as part of a “catch-up” programme.

Why is a booster MMR programme needed?

To give your child better protection against measles, mumps and rubella. Without this catch-up programme there would be a large number of children, all in the same school years, who were not fully protected against these diseases. There would then be the chance of future epidemics among these children.

What does this mean for my child?

For most children this will be a second MMR immunisation. A booster is now the routine in the UK childhood immunisation programme and in over 30 European countries and the USA. For a small number of children this will be their first MMR immunisation. The rest of this leaflet is therefore split into two parts depending on whether your child has had a MMR immunisation before or not.

If your child has already had one MMR immunisation:

Why does my child need another immunisation?

MMR vaccine does not always work perfectly first time. (Around 5 to 10 per cent of children will remain unprotected after their first MMR immunisation.) A second dose makes sure that your child has the best protection against these serious diseases and boosts their immunity.

If your child has never had MMR:

Are there any new side effects from a second MMR?

Side effects from the second MMR immunisation are even rarer than after the first (see below for side effects following first MMR). Those that do happen are most likely in the small number of children who did not get protected by the first immunisation. These are the children who need the immunisation most. There are no new side effects from a second MMR immunisation.

When should my child get their second MMR?

Your GP can arrange for your child to have their second MMR during the coming year. If you are in any doubt about this, speak with your GP.

MMR vaccine

The MMR vaccine protects your child against Measles, Mumps and Rubella (German measles).

What is measles?

The measles virus is very infectious. It causes a high fever and a rash. About one in 15 children who catch measles are at risk of complications which may include chest infections, fits and brain damage.

What is mumps?

The mumps virus causes swollen glands in the face. Before immunisation was introduced, mumps was the commonest cause of viral meningitis in children under 15. It can also cause deafness, and swelling of the testicles in boys and ovaries in girls.

What is rubella?

Rubella, German measles, is usually very mild and isn’t likely to cause your child any problems. However, if a pregnant woman catches it early in her pregnancy, it can harm the unborn baby.

Do children really need protection against these illnesses? I’ve heard they’re usually mild.

Yes, they can be mild. In some children the illness can pass almost unnoticed, but others can become very ill. The most dangerous thing about these illnesses is that they can cause complications. Before measles vaccine was introduced, about 90 children a year in the UK died from this disease. Because of immunisation, children in this country no longer die of measles.