



Measles: What Parents Need to Know

We will be routinely vaccinating children at 18 months with the MMRV immunization, brand named Proquad, instead of at 4 years to give earlier protection to young children against measles, mumps, rubella, and varicella (chickenpox). This immunization will be instead of the one at 4 years not in addition to. This will be one less shot at 4 years.

Measles is a highly contagious disease caused by the measles virus. The infection can lead to serious and sometimes fatal complications. Measles is a vaccine-preventable illness but when immunization rates fall below 95% outbreaks are possible if a case is introduced into our community.

Austin Public Health on July 2nd, 2024, sent a Health Authority Update that stated: “Since 2019 the herd immunity in Travis county has dropped from 96% in 2019 to 90.37% in 2023. Modeling data shows that this level of immunity in our community puts us at risk for an outbreak if we have a case of measles introduce the virus into our community.” There currently are several cities in the US with measles outbreaks.

Protection for foreign travel:

Babies younger than age 6 months cannot be vaccinated yet but may have some protection from antibodies passed to them during pregnancy.

Babies aged 6 to 11 months old should receive their first MMR vaccine dose at least two weeks before **traveling** outside the country. They will still need the **standard 2-dose series** if they received a dose before age 12 months.

Babies 12 months and older should receive their first dose of MMR vaccine in addition to the **other vaccines recommended** at that age (Hepatitis A, Varicella). In our practice we give the MMR and Varicella separately at 12 months as the combination vaccine (MMRV) if given as the first dose causes more fever. Infants 12 months and older should also receive a second dose of the MMR vaccine at least 28 days after the first dose if traveling abroad. This can be given as MMRV.

MMRV vaccine can prevent **measles, mumps, rubella, and varicella.**

- **MEASLES (M)** causes fever, cough, runny nose, and red, watery eyes, commonly followed by a rash that covers the whole body. It can lead to seizures (often associated with fever), ear infections, diarrhea, and pneumonia. Rarely, measles can cause brain damage or death.
- **MUMPS (M)** causes fever, headache, muscle aches, tiredness, loss of appetite, and swollen and tender salivary glands under the ears. It can lead to deafness, swelling of the brain and/or spinal cord covering, painful swelling of the testicles or ovaries, and, very rarely, death.
- **RUBELLA (R)** or German Measles causes fever, sore throat, rash, headache, and eye irritation. It can cause arthritis in up to half of teenage and adult women. If a person gets rubella while they are pregnant, they could have a miscarriage, or the baby could be born with serious birth defects, autism, blindness and deafness.
- **VARICELLA (V)**, also called “chickenpox,” causes an itchy rash, in addition to fever, tiredness, loss of appetite, and headache. It can lead to skin infections, pneumonia, inflammation of the blood vessels, swelling of the brain and/or spinal cord covering, and infection of the blood, bones, or joints. Some people who get chickenpox get a painful rash called “shingles” (also known as herpes zoster) years later.