

# Measles: Myths vs Facts

✗ **MYTH:** *Measles is not a serious disease, and it's "just a cold".*

✓ **FACT:** Measles can cause serious complications like pneumonia (lung infection), encephalitis (brain swelling), and even death, especially in young children when not vaccinated. Estimates show that 1-3 out of 1,000 children infected with measles will die.

✗ **MYTH:** *Measles has been eradicated in the United States.*

✓ **FACT:** Measles was eliminated in the US in 2000 due to the highly effective MMR vaccine and high vaccination rates. At least 95% of a community must be vaccinated to prevent measles cases and outbreaks. Unfortunately, measles outbreaks can still occur due to declining vaccination rates and travel of unvaccinated people.



✗ **MYTH:** *Your natural immune system can protect you from getting measles.*

✓ **FACT:** Measles is very contagious and spreads very easily. If one person has it, 9 out of 10 unvaccinated people will also become infected if exposed to them, regardless of medical history or nutrition. It spreads through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The measles virus remains in the air and on infected surfaces for up to 2 hours after an infected person leaves a room.

The best and only effective way to prevent getting measles is being vaccinated with the MMR vaccine.

✗ **MYTH:** *Vaccinated individuals and vaccine clinics are spreading measles.*

✓ **FACT:** The measles vaccine contains a live, weakened form of the virus that can't infect people, and it has never been shown to spread to others. Measles cases and outbreaks are caused by a wild-type strain of the measles virus, not the vaccine strain. The MMR vaccine does not cause measles but rather trains your immune system to recognize the measles virus and develop protection against it.

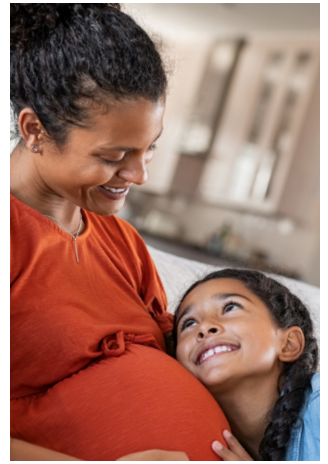
✗ **MYTH:** *The measles vaccine is not effective and is dangerous.*

✓ **FACT:** The MMR vaccine prevents measles and two other viral diseases including mumps and rubella. The MMR vaccine is highly effective at preventing measles with two doses being 97% effective and provides lifelong immunity. Also, there have been no deaths shown to be related to the MMR vaccine in healthy people. The MMR vaccine is very safe, with possible temporary side effects including sore arm (from the shot), fever, mild rash, temporary pain/stiffness in joints. Getting the vaccine is much safer than getting measles.

❌ **MYTH: The MMR vaccine causes autism.**

✅ **FACT: The MMR vaccine does NOT cause autism.** There are many large well-done studies looking at hundreds of thousands of children, and they do not show any evidence that the MMR vaccine causes autism. No vaccine component can alter or change your brain or neurological system.

Most brain changes associated with autism occur while a baby is developing in the womb or during birth, well before a child receives vaccines. About 85% of the risk for autism is genetic. Evidence has also shown that environmental exposures can contribute to the development of autism, such as advanced parental age, premature birth, low birth weight, prenatal exposure to air pollution or certain pesticides, and maternal conditions, such as diabetes or immune system disorders.



❌ **MYTH: You can prevent measles with alternative treatments like vitamin A.**

✅ **FACT: There are no proven dietary or lifestyle preventative measures for measles. The best and only proven way to prevent measles is through vaccination with the MMR vaccine.** The CDC recommends all children receive two doses of MMR vaccine starting at 12-15 months of age and then with a second dose between 4-6 years old. The vaccine takes about two to three weeks to provide full protection. If your family is traveling overseas, speak with your healthcare provider about getting the MMR vaccine sooner.

Vitamin A can sometimes help support the treatment for young children who develop severe measles. This treatment must be done under the supervision of a health care provider in a hospital, but vitamin A will not protect you from getting a measles infection. Vitamin A supports your immune system. It is not a cure for measles infection, and it is not a replacement or alternative for MMR vaccination. Taking too much vitamin A can be very dangerous and toxic causing neurological issues and liver failure.



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

CDPH Immunization clinics provide services to all Chicago residents. You may be asked to show proof of residence.

**CHICAGO.GOV/VACCINES**



**CHICAGO.GOV/MEASLES**

If you need help identifying another vaccination provider, please visit:

**VFC.ILLINOIS.GOV/SEARCH/**

### References:

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