

# Information for patients and carers

## Rashes and Measles in Pregnancy

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consisting of three overlapping, wavy bands of blue. The top band is a light blue, the middle is a medium blue, and the bottom is a dark blue.

## What is measles?

Measles is an infection that spreads very easily and can cause serious complications in some people, including pregnant women.

If you contract measles in pregnancy, it will not cause a structural problem to your baby but sadly it does increase the chance of:

- Miscarriage or stillbirth
- Premature birth (birth before 37 weeks)
- Your baby having a low birth weight

It is important to get medical advice if you are pregnant and have been in close contact (spent more than 15 minutes) with someone who has measles.

## What are the symptoms of measles?

Measles usually starts with cold-like symptoms, followed by a rash a few days later. Some people may also get small spots in their mouth.

The first symptoms of measles include:

- A high temperature
- A runny or blocked nose
- Sneezing
- A cough
- Red, sore, watery eyes.
- Small white spots inside the cheeks and on the back of the lips.
- A rash which appears typically a few days after the cold like symptoms starting on the face and behind the ears before spreading to the rest of the body

## What should I do if I have symptoms, or I have come into contact with someone with a rash or suspected measles?

Please let your midwife, GP or obstetrician know immediately if you have a rash or symptoms of measles or have had any contact with another person with a rash or symptoms of measles.

Please do not delay reporting a rash, as it may be more difficult to give you an accurate diagnosis or delay any recommended treatment.

**Please avoid other pregnant women until you have been assessed. Measles can spread easily to others.**

If you need to access maternity care, **please telephone ahead**. This includes if you are coming to hospital in labour, as well as triage or routine appointments or ultrasound scans. This will help us to provide care for you in the most appropriate location while protecting other patients and staff.

Any illness where you have a high temperature, and a rash may be due to you having an infectious disease such as measles. Some infections can harm your unborn baby. You may be offered tests to find out if you have been infected.

The health professional that assesses you will need to know:

- How many weeks pregnant you are
- When your contact with someone with a rash happened
- The date that you first developed a rash
- A description of the rash (is it a raised, bumpy rash or is it blisters filled with fluid?)
- What infections you have had in the past, such as Chickenpox
- What vaccinations you have previously had

## How to look after yourself if you have measles?

Measles usually starts to get better in about 7 to 10 days.

If you develop any difficulty in breathing, confusion, or fits (seizures) its important to call 999 or attend A&E.

Take care to closely monitor your baby's movements on a day-to-day basis and let us know urgently if the pattern changes or has reduced.

There are things that you can do to ease the symptoms and reduce the risk of spreading the infection.

It can help to:

- Rest and drink plenty of fluids, such as water, to avoid dehydration
- Take paracetamol to relieve a high temperature
- Use cotton wool soaked in warm water to remove any crusts from the eyes

Stay off work for at least 4 days from when the rash first appears.

## How to avoid spreading or catching measles

Measles is spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes. There are things that you can do to reduce the risk of spreading or catching it:

- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water
- Use tissues when you cough or sneeze
- Throw used tissues in the bin

Do not share cutlery, cups, towels, clothes or bedding.

## Vaccination against measles

The MMR vaccine can prevent measles, it also protects you from mumps and rubella.

Two doses of MMR vaccine can give lifelong protection against measles, mumps and rubella.

Ask at your GP surgery if you are not sure if you have been vaccinated. If you have not been vaccinated against measles, your GP can arrange for you to have the MMR vaccine **after** your baby is born. It is not recommended to have the MMR vaccine whilst pregnant.

## Why do I need the MMR vaccination after pregnancy?

This will protect you and your baby in any future pregnancy and give you longer term protection against measles, mumps and rubella. You will need 2 doses of the vaccine if you have not had it before. Your practice nurse will give the first vaccine at the same time as your post-natal check and will give the second dose a month later. You should avoid becoming pregnant for 1 month after the vaccinations, so you need to have a reliable method of contraception. If you are not sure if you have had MMR vaccination, you can check with your GP surgery at your post-natal check.

## Can I breastfeed my baby following MMR vaccination?

Yes, it is safe to breastfeed your baby after you have had measles vaccinations.

## Will my baby be protected after I have been vaccinated?

Newborn babies have antibodies passed on from their mother at birth. This helps protect them for a short time against measles, mumps and rubella. To ensure that your baby remains protected against measles, the MMR vaccine is given to babies as part of the NHS vaccination schedule. The MMR vaccine is given as 2 doses of a single injection. Both doses of the vaccine are needed to ensure that your baby has full protection.

You can ask your health visitor for further information regarding the NHS vaccination schedule for babies and children.

## Contact details

Should you require further advice or information please telephone the maternity assessment suite on **01772 524495**.

## Sources of further information

[www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk](http://www.lancsteachinghospitals.nhs.uk)

[www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

[www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)

[www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles/](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/measles/)

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**This information can be made available in large print, audio, Braille and in other languages.**

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