

# The Measles Vaccine in Arkansas: What, Who, Where, When and How

## What is measles and the measles vaccine?

Measles is a highly contagious disease. It can be serious for young children. The best way to prevent measles is the MMR vaccine which protects against measles, mumps and rubella. Although the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) declared measles eliminated in the United States in 2000, there have been cases and outbreaks in the US since then. This shows us the importance of continued vaccination in the US, since diseases may continue to occur in other parts of the world.

## Who gets the vaccine and when do they get it?

Two doses of the MMR vaccine are usually recommended for all children. The first dose is at 12 months of age and second dose at 4-6 years of age. When there is an outbreak in the community, the second dose may be given earlier, as long as the second dose is given at least 4 weeks after the first dose. During an outbreak, infants as young as 6 months of age may also receive an early dose of the MMR vaccine. However, those infants will still need to complete the routine two-dose series starting at age 12 months.

Adults born in 1957 or after are also recommended to get a dose of the MMR vaccine, if they haven't already received one. If they are in certain high-risk groups, they should get two doses at least 4 weeks apart. The high-risk groups include people more likely to be exposed to measles, such as people who

- are college students,
- work in health care,
- live with someone who has a weakened immune system who is not immune to measles,
- travel internationally, or
- are part of a measles outbreak.

Adults born before 1957 are thought to be immune, so the MMR vaccine is not recommended for them, unless they are health care personnel who should get the 2-dose MMR vaccine series. Each dose of MMR vaccine is given as a subcutaneous shot in the upper arm. Subcutaneous means under the skin.

## Vaccine information for people aged 6 months through 18 years, who are uninsured or on Medicaid, or who are American Indian or native Alaskan:

MMR vaccination is available at any medical clinic that participates in the Vaccines for Children (VFC) program and at no cost to the patient from all Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) local health units. Some pharmacies also participate in the VFC program and can vaccinate children 7-18 years of age. Call ahead for an appointment and bring your Medicaid card, if you have one. Visit <https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/health-units> to find an ADH local health unit near you.

### **Vaccine information for people aged 6 months or older with health insurance:**

MMR vaccination is available at many medical clinics that stock the MMR vaccine. It is also available at no cost to the patient through all of the Arkansas Department of Health local health units. All persons aged 6 months through 18 years and persons aged 19 years and older, who are applying or intend to go to college, may receive two doses of the MMR vaccine at the local health units. Persons aged 19 years and older who are not first-year college students may receive their first dose of MMR vaccine at the local health units. Call ahead for an appointment and bring your insurance card.

### **Vaccine information for people aged 7 years and older with insurance:**

MMR vaccination is available at pharmacies that stock the MMR vaccine. It is often at no cost to the patient, depending on their insurance. Persons 19 years of age and older who are on Medicaid may be able to get the MMR vaccine at a pharmacy. Call ahead to make sure the pharmacy has the MMR vaccine in stock.

### **Vaccine information for people age 19 and older, who are uninsured or on Medicaid:**

Any adult can get the first dose of MMR vaccine at any of the Arkansas Department of Health local health units at no cost. Persons who are in their first year of college or who are applying or intend to go to college may also receive a second dose of MMR at all of the Arkansas Department of Health local health units. Visit <https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/health-units> to find an ADH local health unit near you.

Persons without insurance who wish to get the MMR vaccine at a pharmacy or medical clinic will need to pay for MMR vaccine themselves. The cost for one dose of the MMR vaccine is approximately \$100.

- Persons who are unable to afford the cost of MMR vaccination may be eligible for Merck's Patient Assistance Program. Merck is the manufacturer of the MMR vaccine. More information about the Merck Patient Assistance Program can be found at [www.merckhelps.com](http://www.merckhelps.com).
- Wal-Mart, CVS Pharmacy, Walgreens, Kroger Pharmacy, and Target (CVS) participate in the GoodRx coupon program that offers discounts on MMR vaccine. The coupons can be obtained at the following link: <https://www.goodrx.com/mmr>.

