

The mmr vaccine against three diseases – measles, mumps and rubella

[Health & Medicine](#), [Disease](#)



The MMR vaccine was introduced in October 1988 to provide a one-shot immunisation against three diseases - measles, mumps and rubella. Since its widespread introduction, recommended by the WorldHealthOrganisation, rates of these diseases have fallen close to zero in immunised western populations. FOR Two doses of MMR gives 99 per cent protection against measles - the most serious of the diseases immunised against. Most doctors believe giving the three vaccines at once is a good idea.

If given one at a time (three single vaccines followed by a booster for each), they have to be carefully spaced out. The fear is that many parents would fail to complete the course. Children could also be vulnerable to infection between inoculations. If more than 15 per cent of the population fail to vaccinate their children, measles epidemics could return to the UK. Government-commissioned study (published in the Lancet in 1999) investigated claims that MMR was linked to autism and bowel disease. It concluded there was no link.

Another study commissioned by the Department of Health and published in January this year also gave MMR the all-clear. The scientific establishment remains convinced that MMR is the safest option. Professor Peter Lachman, President of the Academy of Medical Sciences, said: 'Even if there are dangers, all the evidence suggests that the chances of something nasty happening to you as a result of not getting vaccinated are around 100 times greater than something nasty happening to you if you do.' AGAINST

Parents first voiced concerns over links between MMR and autism and the bowel condition Crohn's disease in the mid-1990s. There were several cases

of healthy children developing these conditions after being given the vaccine. Increasing numbers of parents decided not to have their children vaccinated with the triple vaccine. They were supported by a handful of doctors happy to administer the vaccines in single doses. Dr Andrew Wakefield, a consultant gastroenterologist, drew national attention to a possible link between the illnesses and the MMR method of vaccination in a study in 1998.

Dr Wakefield resigned from his post at the Royal Free and University College Medical School in North London earlier this month after being told his research did not 'fit in' with the college's strategy. Dr Wakefield claims combining three live viruses in one injection could be dangerous. He has speculated that the MMR vaccine damages the bowel, releasing toxins that travel to the brain and trigger autism. He recommends children are vaccinated against mumps, measles and rubella one at a time.

Paul Shattock, of the Autism Research Unit in Sheffield, who is carrying out a large-scale study of 5,000 autistic children in Britain, supports Dr Wakefield's findings. There is growing interest in his work in Canada and the U. S. where similar concerns about MMR have been raised. Statistics on autism seem to back up the suspicions of those opposed to the MMR vaccine. Some research suggests a ten-fold rise in cases in the past ten years. This corresponds to the introduction of MMR. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-89553/The-case-MMR-vaccine.html>