

## Measles is no child's play!

Measles is a **highly contagious disease** that is transmitted via droplets, which means when speaking, coughing or sneezing. Measles can **have very serious consequences for infants, children as well as adolescents and adults!**

As long as there are vaccination gaps within the population, which means that too little people are protected against measles, we must count with further cases of measles. Children in Austria receive the 2 vaccines against measles too late and with too little consistency: The vaccination coverage of children between 2 and 5 is of 92 percent, and approximately 10 percent of them are only vaccinated once instead of twice. Another half million of people between the age of 15 and 30 have only been vaccinated once against measles. In order to reach sufficient herd immunity, a vaccination coverage of 95 percent is required with two doses of a live vaccine against measles.

## Symptoms and course of the disease

Eight to ten days following the infection (21 days at most), measles causes general symptoms such as fever, runny nose, cough and conjunctivitis along with the typical measles rash: large red spots. People infected with measles remain highly contagious for about four days before and four days after the rash has appeared. The **body's immune system is so weakened** during and after a measles infection that the risk of death by other diseases remains higher for many years!

In 20 of 100 cases of measles, complications such

as bronchitis, otitis media and/or pneumonia occur. **1-2 of 1,000 people infected with measles develop a life-threatening encephalitis.** There is no treatment for the infection caused by the measles virus itself, it is only possible to alleviate the symptoms. The disease provides lifelong immunity.

In rare cases, brain decomposition can occur years after an acute case measles, which is always fatal. This late effect is called subacute sclerosing panencephalitis (SSPE). Children are particularly vulnerable to SSPE if they have fallen ill in the first year of their life or are infected during birth. Therefore, it is particularly important for everyone in the immediate environment of infants/toddlers to be vaccinated.

## Measles could be eradicated!

Since humans are the only host, a consequently high vaccination coverage of the population of 95% with 2 doses of a live vaccine against measles could stop the transmission of the virus. With the help of correspondingly high vaccination rates, the measles virus could be eradicated in our country.

## Free timely vaccination!

The vaccination against measles is carried out as a combined vaccine against measles, mumps and rubella (MMR). It is a live vaccination. The attenuated viruses it contains provoke a reaction of the immune system which will then prevent from falling ill.

With a timely vaccination, you can protect yourself, your family and your environment. We recommend **getting two vaccines at an interval of**

**four weeks from the age of nine months.** Children should imperatively be vaccinated before entering community institutions (e.g. kindergarten).

## Checking and renewing vaccinations at all ages

If you have missed a vaccination, you can and should **reschedule at any age.** Sufficient protection exists after 2 vaccinations with a live vaccine documented in writing or if protective antibody levels are detected in the blood (against measles).

The efficacious and well-tolerated vaccine is **available for free to everyone at public vaccination centres without any age restriction.**

## Vaccination of adolescents

Adolescents that are not vaccinated or only received one vaccine against measles, or do not have vaccination documentation (vaccination card) should get the missing vaccine as soon as possible.

## Vaccination of young women

Before a planned pregnancy, it is imperative to check the immune status for protection against measles and rubella. It is not possible to get vaccinated against measles, mumps and rubella during the pregnancy!

## Vaccination of adults

Adults and young adults who work in community institutions (such as kindergartens, schools, etc.) should have their immune status checked. This applies in particular to parents and young adults for the protection of infants living in their household and who are not yet vaccinated.

## Vaccination of health workers

Hospital staff and of other health institutions who are in contact with people infected with measles or with infectious material should be sufficiently protected against measles for their own protection and that of the people they care for. In the absence of immunity, vaccination must be considered a moral obligation. Employers have the right to ask for the vaccination status of new employees as well as existing staff.

## Measles and consequences for everyday life

People who do not have sufficient protection against measles (2 vaccinations documented in writing with a live vaccine or proof of protective antibody levels against measles in the blood) and have come into contact with a person infected with measles must submit themselves to what is called "traffic restrictions" for 21 days as ordered by health authorities. This means for example that they cannot visit public institutions, community institutions (such as kindergartens, schools, etc.) in order to avoid spreading the virus (see chapters 6 ff. of the Austrian Law on Epidemics).

## Well-tolerated and reliable protection

The MMR vaccine is very well-tolerated. Just like any other vaccination, painful redness and swelling

can occur at the point of injection of the MMR vaccine. A temporary fever or a rash resembling measles can also occur. Nevertheless, the measles vaccine is harmless: **Over three million doses of MMR vaccine have been administered since 1998 and the safety and efficacy of the vaccine has been clearly proven.** It is not possible to overvaccinate.

## In what cases should you not get vaccinated?

Pregnant women, people with a weakened immune system or people with a fever over 38°C should not be vaccinated. People who have known allergies should seek advice from their physician before a planned vaccination.

## Additional information:

- [www.keinemasern.at](http://www.keinemasern.at)
- Public information and vaccination centres of the federal states:  
[www.gesundheit.gv.at/service/beratungsstellen/impfen](http://www.gesundheit.gv.at/service/beratungsstellen/impfen)
- 2017 Austrian Vaccination Plan (Impfplan Österreich 2017):  
[www.bmgf.gv.at/impfen](http://www.bmgf.gv.at/impfen)

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Why  
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