



Question of the week

What is MMR, and what is the MMR vaccine?



MMR stands for measles, mumps and rubella, three viral diseases that can cause serious health complications, especially in children. The vaccine to prevent these diseases is called the MMR vaccine.

Due to widespread vaccination programs, MMR hasn't been a significant concern for many communities. Since the introduction of the MMR vaccine, rates of measles, mumps and rubella have significantly declined in countries where vaccination programs are well-established, including the U.S. and in Louisiana. The vaccine has effectively prevented these diseases and their associated complications.

However, in recent years, there have been concerns about declining vaccination rates and outbreaks of these diseases in some regions of the country, including [two cases](#) of measles diagnosed in Greater New Orleans last week. The Louisiana Department of Health has started a public health investigation and will provide additional updates as more information is collected.

[According to CDC](#), the main reasons for measles occurring are:

- An increase in the number of travelers who get measles abroad and bring it into the U.S., and/or
- Spread of measles in U.S. communities with pockets of unvaccinated people.

Other factors that contribute to lower vaccination rates include vaccine hesitancy, misinformation about vaccine safety and logistical challenges in accessing healthcare services.

The latest on measles outbreak and how it compares to previous ones

Measles was declared eliminated in the United States in 2000, but sporadic outbreaks have occurred since. In 2019, there were approximately 1,274 confirmed cases in 31 states, primarily linked to travelers from countries with outbreaks. [As of February 29, 2024, a total of 41 measles cases were reported by 16 jurisdictions](#): Arizona, California, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, **Louisiana**, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New York City, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Washington.



- In Florida, a localized outbreak at Manatee Bay Elementary in Weston resulted in seven cases, while Central Florida had one travel-related case.
- The Philadelphia Department of Public Health recently announced the end of a measles outbreak that affected the city between December 2023 and January 2024, with nine confirmed cases overall.

Measles treatment:

There is no specific treatment for measles, but medications can help manage symptoms and complications. Children with severe cases may be given regular doses of vitamin A to support recovery.

Can you get measles even if you are vaccinated?

The MMR vaccine is highly effective at preventing measles. Two doses are recommended for children, with the first dose between 12 and 15 months and the second dose between 4 and 6 years. While the vaccine is about 97% effective, a small number of people may still get measles after vaccination. However, they typically experience a milder illness.

For more information

About measles: [Measles \(Rubeola\) | CDC](#)

Measles FAQ: [Frequently Asked Questions](#)

For healthcare providers: [For Healthcare Professionals - Diagnosing and Treating Measles | CDC](#)

CDC recommends seniors get another COVID-19 shot

The current COVID-19 vaccine, updated last fall, is highly effective but protection may wane over time, especially in older individuals [whose immune systems don't respond as robustly](#). Recent CDC studies indicate that although 98% of the U.S. population has some form of immunity to COVID-19, the vaccine offers protection that will minimize the severity of a COVID-19 infection.



Data reveals that older adults have been most vulnerable to severe COVID-19 effects, with higher hospitalization and mortality rates compared to other age groups. Shockingly, many hospitalized older adults had no record of vaccination against COVID-19.

Despite vaccine availability, uptake rates remain low. Confidence in the vaccine has declined, with fewer people perceiving COVID-19 as a significant threat. However, the virus continues to pose a substantial risk, particularly to vulnerable populations.

The latest data from the CDC underscores the urgency for vaccination, especially among high-risk groups. Yet, there's a [significant gap in doctor recommendations](#) for vaccination, contributing to lower vaccination rates among high-risk individuals.

The latest CDC COVID-19 vaccination recommendation are as follows:

- People ages 65 years and older who **are not** moderately or severely immunocompromised should receive 1 additional dose of any updated (2023–2024 Formula) COVID-19 vaccine (i.e., Moderna, Novavax, Pfizer-BioNTech) at least **4 months** following the previous dose of updated (2023–2024 Formula) COVID-19 vaccine.
- People ages 65 years and older who **are** moderately or severely immunocompromised should receive 1 additional dose of any updated (2023–2024 Formula) COVID-19 vaccine (i.e., Moderna, Novavax, Pfizer-BioNTech) at least **2 months** after the last dose of updated (2023–2024 Formula) vaccine.

For details on these latest recommendations issued on Feb. 29, see this [link](#).

Understanding disease outbreaks and vaccines: insights from Dr. Katie O'Neal

In our latest blog post of Vax Matters, we're taking a close look at disease outbreaks and how vaccines help stop them. Our featured guest, Dr. Katie O'Neal, shares her knowledge about infectious diseases and how they spread.

The scoop on outbreaks

Dr. O'Neal tells us that outbreaks happen when there's a sudden increase in a sickness, like COVID-19. These outbreaks can be local (in one place) or global (all over the world). Diseases can come from contaminated food, animals or even just being around sick people.

What causes diseases to spread?

Infectious diseases are everywhere, from our bodies to the environment. Dr. O'Neal explains that we can catch diseases through direct contact (like eating contaminated food) or indirect contact (touching something that someone sick touched). Sometimes, diseases can spread through the air, too!

Stopping the spread: vaccines to the rescue

Vaccines are like practice for our immune system. Dr. O'Neal says, "I want to practice to be better." When we get vaccines, our bodies learn to fight off diseases before they make us sick. Washing our hands and cooking food well also helps keep us safe.

Understanding how diseases end

Dr. O'Neal tells us that diseases end when enough people are immune to them. Vaccines help build immunity faster and protect us from getting sick.

Tips for staying healthy

Remember to wash your hands, cover your mouth when coughing or sneezing and get vaccinated when it's your turn. These simple steps can help keep you and your community healthy!



Conclusion: being informed is key

By learning about disease outbreaks and how vaccines work, we can all do our part to stay healthy and stop the spread of sickness. Let's work together to keep our communities safe! This blog post shares insights from Dr. Katie O'Neal's conversation on the Vax Matters podcast.

To hear more about disease outbreaks and vaccines, check out the full episode [here](#).

ICYMI: Immunization records now available in Spanish

Louisiana residents can conveniently access their vaccination records online through the [MyIR Mobile portal](#), available in both Spanish and English.

Keeping track of vaccination records is important for school attendance, job requirements, participation in some sports leagues and some international travel.

Los registros de vacunación en línea ahora están disponibles en español.

MyIR Mobile permite un acceso personal, fácil y seguro en cualquier momento

Tener un control de su registro de vacunación y los de sus familiares es importante para asistir a la escuela, cumplir con los requisitos laborales, participar en algunas ligas deportivas y hacer algunos viajes internacionales. Para los residentes de Louisiana, estos registros vitales están disponibles en línea de forma segura en español y en inglés en el portal de MyIR Mobile.

MyIR Mobile es la plataforma en línea de Louisiana que les permite a los residentes revisar sus historiales de vacunación, recibir recordatorios de futuras vacunas e imprimir sus registros de vacunación oficiales a través de SMART Health Card.

This platform allows users to review their immunization history, receive reminders for upcoming vaccinations and print official records using a SMART Health Card.

According to Chaquetta Johnson, Director of the Louisiana Department of Health's Immunization Program, the addition of Spanish language support reflects the growing need for accessible health records.

MyIR Mobile empowers individuals to manage their health proactively, with options to display the account in English or Spanish. By leveraging the Louisiana Immunization Registry, LINKS, MyIR facilitates seamless communication between users and the LDH Immunization Program, ensuring timely vaccination updates and reminders.

Register for MyIR [here](#).





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