

Vaccinations at secondary school

Vaccination
is a choice.

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you the information
you need.



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**PROTECT
THEIR
POTENTIAL**

Which vaccines are given at secondary school?

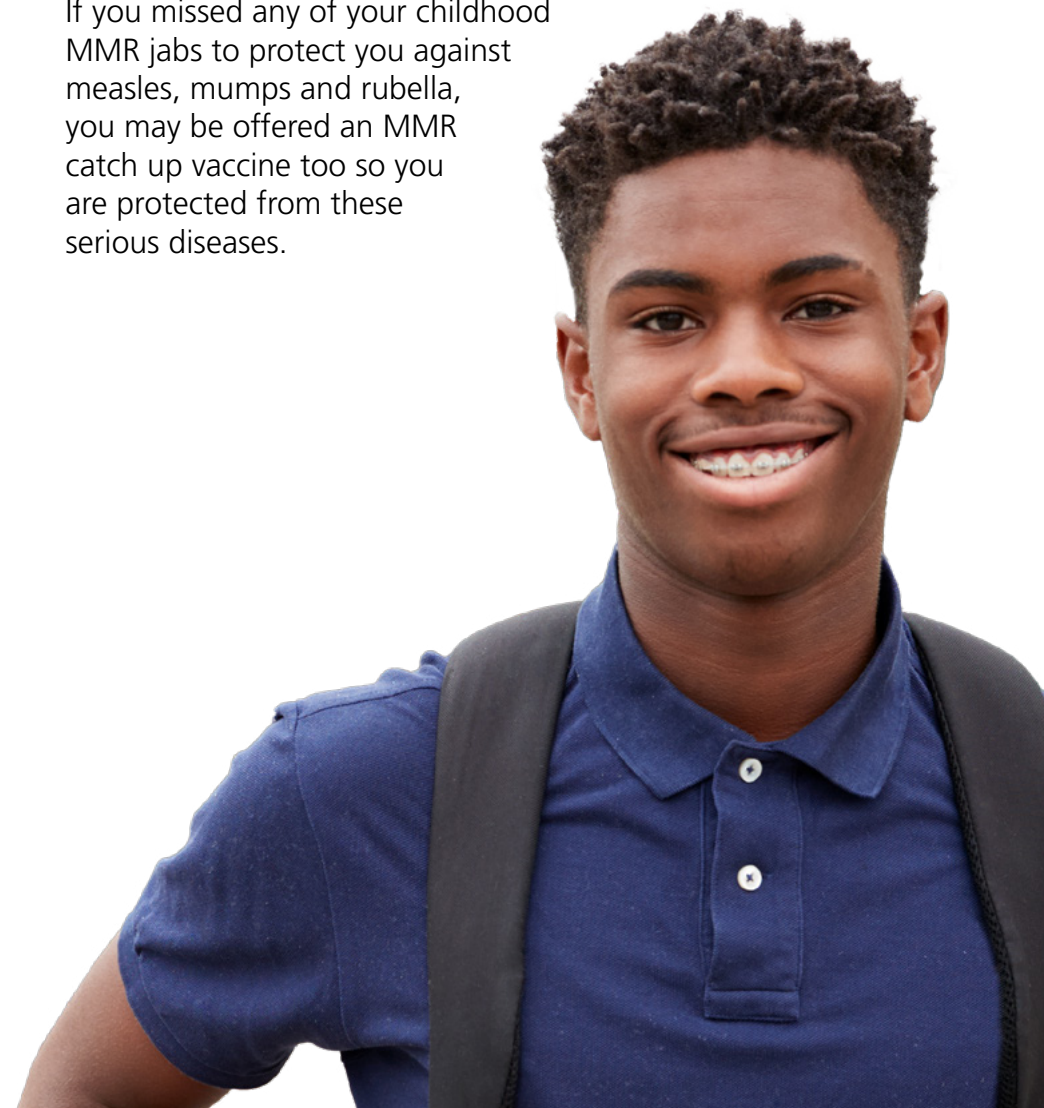
Getting vaccinated is a normal part of growing up in the UK. Vaccines save millions of lives all over the world and diseases like smallpox and polio, which used to kill or disable millions of people, have now disappeared or are seen very rarely.

Most vaccines are given before a child starts primary school but there are three vaccines that are offered at secondary school to protect against serious diseases.

School year/age	Vaccine	To protect against
12 to 13 (school year 8)	HPV vaccine	Human papillomavirus (HPV) which can cause certain types of cancer including cervical and penile cancer
13 or 14 years old (school year 9 or 10)	MenACWY vaccine	Meningitis and septicaemia (blood poisoning)
13 or 14 (school year 9)	3-in-1 teenage booster vaccine	Polio, diphtheria, and tetanus and tops up protection from vaccines given in childhood

Each year, in the autumn term, a flu vaccination is offered to every child from reception to year 11. The flu vaccine is offered every year as the flu virus changes, so it's important to make sure you stay up to date and fully protected.

If you missed any of your childhood MMR jabs to protect you against measles, mumps and rubella, you may be offered an MMR catch up vaccine too so you are protected from these serious diseases.



What diseases do these vaccines protect against?

Diphtheria

Diphtheria is a highly contagious infection that can affect the nose, throat, and sometimes the skin. It can be fatal.

HPV

Human papillomavirus (HPV) is a common virus that can spread through skin contact (usually when having sex). Some types of HPV can cause cancers like cervical cancer and penile cancer.

MenACWY

This is a bacterial infection that can cause serious illnesses such as meningitis which can be deadly. Meningitis can spread very quickly in places like colleges and universities.

Polio

Polio is a serious infection that's now very rare because of the vaccination programme. Polio can lead to problems occurring with the brain and nerves which can cause muscle weakness (paralysis) and be life-threatening.

Tetanus

Tetanus is a serious, potentially deadly infection caused by bacteria getting into a wound. It can cause a stiff jaw, muscle spasms, high temperature, difficulty breathing and fits.

Flu

Flu can be a very unpleasant illness and make people seriously ill, requiring hospital treatment.

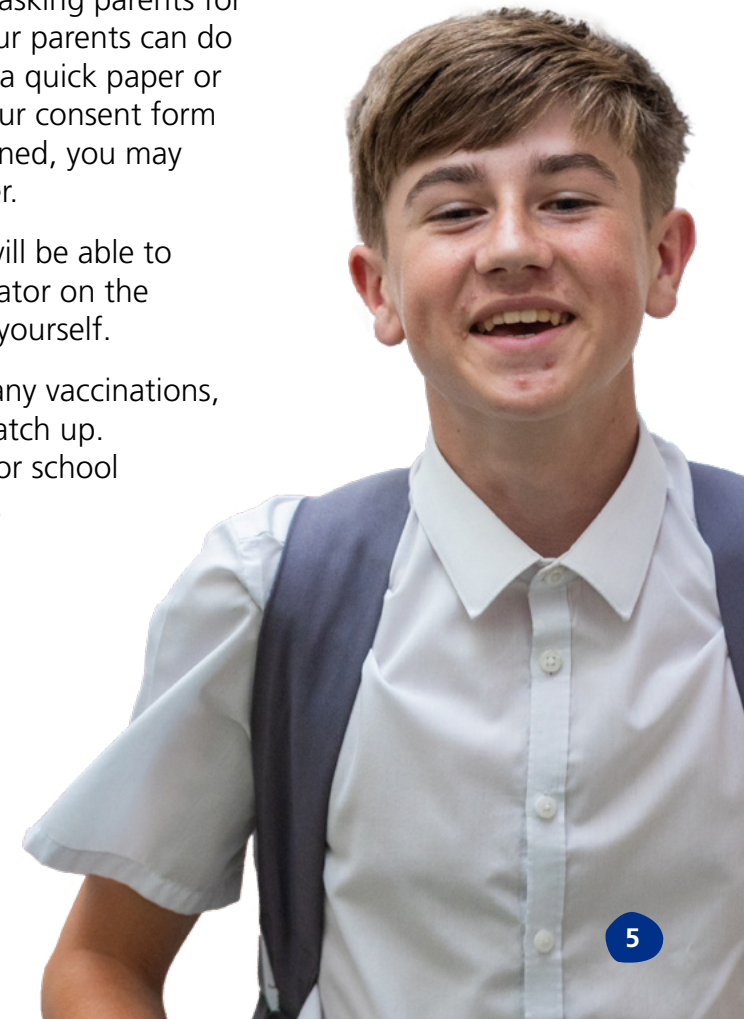
How do school vaccinations work?

A team of trained vaccinators will come to your school. They are very experienced and give thousands of vaccinations every year.

Before they come, a letter will be sent from your school explaining the vaccines and asking parents for their consent. Your parents can do this by filling out a quick paper or online form. If your consent form hasn't been returned, you may receive a reminder.

Sometimes you will be able to talk to the vaccinator on the day and consent yourself.

If you've missed any vaccinations, you can always catch up. Just ask your GP or school vaccination team.



Nervous about needles?

It's important to know that you are not alone.

Lots of teenagers and adults feel anxious about having vaccinations but often find that by talking about their worries and using some helpful calming techniques, it turns out to be a better experience than they thought it was going to be.

While it's completely normal to feel nervous about needles, it's important to not let your worries stop you from making a positive decision for your health.

Here's some tips to help you feel more confident about needles:

- Think about the things that help you to stay calm, this might be focusing on certain objects, visualising peaceful settings or singing a song in your head.
- Practice breathing exercises. Sit in a comfortable position and let your shoulders and jaw relax. Place one hand on your stomach and take a long, deep and slow breath, breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth. Let the breath reach down into your stomach.
- Tell the person giving you your injection about your worries. They can talk through any questions you may have and reassure you through the vaccination.
- Don't worry about what others think if you do show your nerves, 1 in 10 people have a fear of needles so lots of your friends will be feeling the same as you.

Do these vaccines contain any pork gelatine?

While the three main vaccines don't, some MMR vaccines and the flu nasal spray do contain a small amount of pork gelatine. However, there are alternatives available for both, which you can have instead, that do not contain pork gelatine. If you have any concerns or would like an alternative, please speak with your in-school vaccinator or your GP.

Are there side effects?

Like with any medicine, there can be some mild side effects, but these won't last long, and many won't experience any side effects at all.

Common mild side effects may include:

- redness or soreness in the area where the vaccine injection has been given
- feeling a little unwell which may include having a headache, feeling sick or drowsy

It's important to keep in mind that the risk of becoming seriously unwell from these dangerous diseases is far greater than the risk of minor side effects.



How can I find out more about vaccinations?

It's okay to have questions about vaccinations. But it is important to be mindful about where you receive your information from. Anti-vaccine stories and false information can often be spread online through social media or through word of mouth. Always get your vaccine and health information from trusted sources, such as the NHS or World Health Organisation (WHO).

If you have any questions about vaccinations, you can speak to your GP, school nurse or in-school vaccination team, who will be able to talk through any concerns or queries so that you can make the right decision for you.

All evidence tells us that getting vaccinated is much safer than not getting vaccinated.

More information, including real life stories and videos, is on our website.



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