

# Mothers who use alternative medicine less likely to immunise children

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In Ireland, mothers who use complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) are less likely to vaccinate their children with MMR, according to new research. This is the first time that factors other than disadvantage have been shown to influence the uptake of the MMR vaccine in Ireland.

“Our findings show that [mothers](#) who reported using complementary and alternative medicine were less likely to avail of the first MMR at 12 months,” says Dr Anna Clarke from the UCD School of Public Health and Population Science, University College Dublin.

“The only way to prevent measles infection is by vaccination with MMR,” continues Dr Clarke. “Measles is highly infectious and can lead to severe illness and occasionally death..”

“Expectant mothers should be provided with the relevant up-to-date information regarding the appropriate use of complementary and alternative medicines for themselves and their children, starting at the earliest antenatal appointments.”

“All materials promoting MMR vaccinations to parents should highlight that complementary and [alternative medicine](#) use cannot be used as a substitute for vaccination,” adds Dr Clarke.

The study conducted by researchers from University College Dublin, NUI Galway, and the Health Service Executive, and funded by the Health Research Board, also found that lower levels of immunisation

were associated with children of mothers from more disadvantaged backgrounds.

This latest study found an overall uptake rate of 88.7% - a figure which broadly supports the 90% rate of uptake reported by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre research for the same period and area. This figure puts Ireland behind the EU recommended rate of 95% which is set to prevent the spread of disease.

The findings were published in the journal *Vaccine*.

In Ireland, the combined measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccine is administered at 12 months and again at 4-5 years. The latest data from the Health Protection Surveillance Centre suggests that 91% of [children](#) in Ireland receive their first MMR by the age of 24 months.

Provided by University College Dublin

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