

# Mayo Clinic minute: Children should have MMR vaccine for first day of school

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As families around the country get ready to send their children off to school—and some for the first time—it's important to ensure their vaccinations are up to date. Dr. Robert Jacobson, a Mayo Clinic pediatrician, explains why the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine is so important to the health of children and those around them. Consider it an important stop on the path to the classroom.

"The [vaccine](#) is a combination of three vaccines, the 'M' for the measles vaccine, the second 'M' for the mumps vaccine, and the 'R' for the [rubella vaccine](#)," says Jacobson.

The first dose of the vaccine is given at 12 to 15 months of age. It's repeated again at 4 to 6 years, just before the child begins kindergarten.

Jacobson says [measles infection](#) can be very serious.

"It can cause complications, pneumonias, ear infections, encephalitis. It can leave you with a chronic inflammation of your brain called 'subscleosing panencephalitis,' and it can kill."

Mumps can inflame the brain and cause a form of meningitis. Rubella, or German measles, can cause birth defects.

"It's a horrific illness for the [pregnant woman](#) and her offspring," says Jacobson.

All of these viral infections are highly contagious. Jacobson advises parents to get their children vaccinated for their safety and for those around them.

"Everybody needs protection against measles, mumps and rubella."

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