MMRV catch up - Frequently asked questions

What is MMRV?
MMRV is a combined vaccine that helps protect against four infections:

- measles
- mumps
- rubella
- varicella, also called chickenpox

The MMRV vaccine is part of Scotland's childhood immunisation programme.

What is the MMRV catch-up programme?
The MMRV catch-up programme is a time-limited vaccination programme for eligible children who were born before chickenpox vaccination was introduced into Scotland's routine childhood vaccination programme.

The Scottish catch-up programme is for eligible children born between 1 January 2020 and 31 August 2022.

The programme is intended for eligible children who have not already had chickenpox.

Why is a catch-up programme being offered?
Chickenpox is usually a mild illness, but it can still make children feel very unwell.

Most children recover without any problems. However, complications can sometimes happen. These can include:

- skin infections, particularly if the chickenpox spots become infected
- dehydration if a child is unwell and not drinking enough
- lung infections, such as pneumonia
- inflammation affecting the brain or nervous system

Chickenpox can be more serious for newborn babies, pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems.

Vaccination helps protect children from chickenpox and reduces their risk of becoming seriously unwell.

The programme will help protect eligible children, improve control of chickenpox and reduce its spread.

Why has chickenpox vaccination been introduced?
Countries that routinely vaccinate children against chickenpox have seen a large reduction in the number of cases, e.g. Canada and Germany.

The aim is to protect children from chickenpox and reduce the risk of illness and complications.

Scottish programme information states that the vaccine provides around 98% protection in children. If a vaccinated child still develops chickenpox, the illness is usually milder.

My child has already had chickenpox. Do they still need the vaccine?
No. If your child has already had chickenpox, they do not need the MMRV catch-up vaccination.

The catch-up programme is intended for eligible children who have not previously had chickenpox.

If you are not sure whether your child has had chickenpox, speak to the vaccination team. They can check whether vaccination is appropriate.

My child has already had MMR vaccinations. Are they still eligible?
Having received MMR does not necessarily mean your child is protected against chickenpox because the MMR vaccine protects against measles, mumps and rubella, whereas MMRV also protects against varicella (chickenpox).

Children within the catch-up cohort may therefore still be offered MMRV if they have not previously had chickenpox or two doses of a chickenpox-containing vaccine.

The vaccines your child needs will depend on their age, previous vaccinations and the programme they are eligible for.

Children need at least two doses of a vaccine that protects against measles, mumps and rubella for long-lasting protection. These may be MMR, MMRV or a combination of both. Some children may be offered additional doses depending on their age and circumstances.

MMRV is being offered as a catch up programme to those born between 1 January 2020 and 31 August 2022.

My child was born outside the eligible dates. Can they have the vaccine through this catch-up programme?
No. The catch-up programme is for children born **between 1 January 2020 and 31 August 2022 inclusive**. Children outside this nationally defined date-of-birth cohort are not eligible through the NHS catch-up programme.

Vaccination programmes have nationally defined eligibility criteria which determine who is offered vaccination as part of the NHS programme.

Can MMRV give my child chickenpox?
MMRV is a live vaccine, which means it contains weakened forms of the viruses.

The vaccine cannot cause the full illnesses. Some children may have mild vaccine-related symptoms after vaccination, such as a temperature or mild rash.

What if my child is only offered one dose?
If your child was born between **1 January 2020 and 30 June 2024**, they may only be offered **one dose of a vaccine containing chickenpox (varicella)** as part of the catch-up programme.

Parents and carers can be reassured that **one dose provides a high level of protection**, particularly against severe chickenpox. If a vaccinated child does develop chickenpox, the illness is usually **milder than it would have been without vaccination**.

Some children in this age group may also have already had chickenpox and developed some natural immunity.

It is important that **all children, whatever their age, receive two doses of a vaccine containing MMR** to ensure they are protected against measles, mumps and rubella.

My child has already had a chickenpox vaccine privately. What should I do?
Tell the vaccination team if your child has previously received a chickenpox-containing vaccine, including one given privately.

The team can check your child's vaccination history and advise whether another dose is needed and when it should be given.

It is important to let your GP know if your child has received any vaccinations privately. This will ensure their vaccination record is up to date. It is always good to record these in your childs Red Book too.

My child has already had two chickenpox vaccinations. Do they need another dose?
No. Children who have already received **two doses of a chickenpox-containing vaccine** do not need the selective MMRV catch-up dose.

What if I'm not sure whether my child has had chickenpox?
National clinical guidance indicates that uncertainty about previous chickenpox exposure should not prevent an otherwise eligible child being vaccinated.

If you're unsure, you can discuss this with the vaccination team at your child's appointment.

Which vaccine will my child receive?
Scotland uses the **ProQuad** and **Priorix-Tetra** MMRV vaccines. The healthcare professional at your child's appointment can tell you which vaccine is being given.

My child is only being offered one catch-up dose. Will this protect them?
The catch-up programme has been designed as a selective vaccination programme for older children.

The chickenpox vaccine provides a high level of protection. If a vaccinated child still develops chickenpox, the illness is usually milder than in someone who has not been vaccinated.

Does every child receive two doses of MMRV?
No. The vaccines offered depend on when your child was born.

Children born on or after 1 January 2025 are offered MMRV at 12 to 13 months and again at 18 months. Scotland also has transitional arrangements for children born earlier.

This means some children may receive MMR and MMRV rather than two MMRV vaccines.

Will MMRV overload my child's immune system?

No. MMRV does not overload your child's immune system.

Combined vaccines are used to protect children against more than one infection at the same appointment. MMRV helps the immune system develop protection against measles, mumps, rubella and chickenpox.

Using a combined vaccine means children can receive protection against four infections with fewer injections.

Giving your child the MMRV vaccine alongside the other vaccines given at the same age will not overload their immune system. From birth, a child's immune system protects them from the germs that surround them every day, and vaccines use only a small part of the immune system. It allows your child to develop protection against four potentially serious infections with fewer injections.

The MMRV vaccine has been used in other countries for over a decade, including Germany, Canada and have seen a large and rapic reduction in cases.

Is MMRV a new vaccine?
No. MMRV itself is not a new vaccine. It has been used in other countries for a number of years.

MMRV became part of Scotland's routine childhood vaccination programme in January 2026. The MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella) vaccine was developed in 1971 and introduced in the UK in 1988. The MMR vaccine was combined with varicella (chickenpox) to create the MMRV vaccine in 2005.

The MMRV vaccines used in Scotland are ProQuad® and Priorix-Tetra®.

Claims suggesting a link between the MMR vaccine and autism have long been thoroughly researched and discredited. The evidence is clear; the MMR vaccine does not cause autism.
WHO recently highlighted, a robust, extensive evidence base exists showing childhood vaccines do not cause autism. WHO statement on autism-related issues

Is MMRV safe?
Vaccines are carefully assessed before they are used in vaccination programmes.

Like all medicines, MMRV can cause side effects, but not everyone will get them.

The healthcare professional giving the vaccine will check that it is suitable for your child.

What side effects might my child have?
Some children may have mild side effects after vaccination. These can include:

- pain, redness or swelling where the vaccine was given
- a temperature
- feeling unsettled or irritable
- a mild rash

Not every child will have side effects.

Can MMRV cause a febrile seizure?
A fever can sometimes happen following vaccination. A small number of children may have a febrile seizure, which is a seizure associated with a high temperature.

If your child has a seizure, seek urgent medical help.

What if my child has a weakened immune system?
MMRV is a live vaccine and should not normally be given to a child with a severely weakened immune system.

Tell the vaccination team if your child has a condition or is receiving treatment that affects their immune system.

They will check whether the vaccine is suitable and seek specialist advice if needed.

What if someone close to my child has a weakened immune system?
Tell the vaccination team if someone your child has close contact with has a severely weakened immune system.

The team can advise you about any precautions that may be needed.

What if my child has allergies?
Tell the healthcare professional about any allergies your child has before they are vaccinated, particularly if they have previously had a severe allergic reaction to a vaccine or vaccine ingredient.

The vaccination team will check whether MMRV is suitable for your child.

What if my child has an egg allergy?
An egg allergy is not normally a reason to avoid MMRV.

Tell the person giving the vaccination about your child's allergies so they can check that the vaccine is suitable.

Does the MMRV vaccine contain porcine gelatine?
There are two MMRV vaccines used in Scotland: ProQuad® and Priorix-Tetra®.

ProQuad® contains porcine gelatine.

If you have questions or concerns about vaccine ingredients, contact the vaccination team before your child's appointment. They can tell you which vaccine is available and discuss this with you.

Why vaccinate against chickenpox if it is usually mild?
Chickenpox is often mild, but it can still make children very unwell.

Some people can develop more serious illness or complications. Chickenpox can be particularly serious for newborn babies, pregnant women and people with weakened immune systems.

Most children recover without any problems. However, complications can sometimes happen. These can include:

- skin infections, particularly if the chickenpox spots become infected
- dehydration if a child is unwell and not drinking enough
- lung infections, such as pneumonia
- inflammation affecting the brain or nervous system

Vaccination helps protect children from chickenpox and reduces their risk of becoming seriously unwell.

The programme will help protect eligible children, improve control of chickenpox and reduce its spread.

What if my child is unwell on the day of vaccination?
If your child is unwell or has a temperature on the day of their appointment, contact the vaccination team for advice.

A healthcare professional can advise whether the vaccination should go ahead or be rearranged.

I am still unsure about vaccination. Who can I speak to?
It is OK to have questions about vaccination.

Speak to your local vaccination team or healthcare professional if you have questions about your child's health, previous vaccinations, allergies or whether MMRV is suitable for them.

You can also find reliable information on NHS inform.

Does the vaccine contain gelatine?
One of the MMRV vaccines used in Scotland, ProQuad, contains porcine gelatine. Information about vaccine ingredients and suitable alternatives should be discussed with the vaccination team if this is important to you.

My child isn't eligible, but I would like them to receive this vaccine what can I do?
It is recognised that some people may be disappointed that they are not included in the eligibility criteria for theMMRV vaccine programme.
We are aware that the varicella vaccine may be offered privately, outside the routine NHS vaccination programme, by some pharmacies and other providers.
Private sales of vaccines are managed by arrangements between pharmacy companies and vaccine manufacturers and are not controlled or managed by NHS Scotland.

Why are these vaccines combined?

Combining these vacines means children can get this protection with fewer injections. Research in the UK has also shown that most parents supported adding chickenpox vaccination to the childhood vacination programme, and most preferred a combined MMRV vaccine rather than an extra injection.