



28th January 2026

Clinical advice regarding parents who refuse the MMRV vaccine

UKHSA has received reports that some parents are declining the MMRV vaccine for their children.

In these circumstances it is important to try to ascertain why the offer of MMRV is being declined. For example, it may be because the child is immune to chickenpox either through natural infection or having had private monovalent varicella vaccination.

In these circumstances parents should be reassured that their child's immune system will neutralise the varicella component of the MMRV vaccine and will not cause harm to their child. A useful analogy could be an immune child is exposed to natural chicken pox infection in the future, for example by sitting next to someone in school who has chickenpox, their child's immune system will recognise the virus and neutralise it.

Clinicians may be concerned after explanations and reassurance has been given, parents of varicella immune children still decline the MMRV vaccine, leaving the child vulnerable to infections such as measles.

Under the NHS Constitution, patients are entitled only to receive the vaccines recommended by the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation under an NHS-provided national immunisation programme.

Whilst MMRV is the recommended vaccine for eligible children in the routine childhood immunisation programme, healthcare professionals may use their clinical discretion and offer MMR vaccine under a Patient Specific Direction (PSD). It should be noted that this should not be considered the norm, or that choice is being offered in the routine childhood immunisation schedule. It is pragmatic advice in the small number of instances where parents still decline

MMRV after appropriate advice has been given, and the clinician is concerned that the child remains vulnerable to other infections.

Where MMR is offered, centrally procured stock of MMR vaccine can be used.

As the MMRV vaccination programme becomes more established, it is likely that more parents will opt for the NHS provided MMRV vaccine over privately sourced monovalent varicella vaccine, and that as vaccine induced immunity to varicella becomes more prevalent, the incidence of chickenpox infection will decline. It is therefore anticipated that exceptional use of MMR vaccine described above will be short-lived.

Further information about the MMRV vaccination programme can be found in [MMRV vaccination: information for healthcare professionals - GOV.UK](#) and relevant disease chapter of the Green Book [Immunisation against infectious disease - GOV.UK](#)