

MESSAGE FROM PROFESSOR DONALDSON, CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER,
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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UPDATE ON MMR VACCINE

Following recent publicity about MMR vaccine and the availability of single antigen vaccines, the Chairmen of the two relevant independent committees have issued the following advice.

The Committee on Safety of Medicines (CSM) has conducted a further detailed review of the safety data and the Chairman, Professor Alasdair Breckenridge said:
"MMR vaccine is very safe. There is no question mark whatever over its licensing".

Professor Michael Langman, Chairman of the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation said:

"My committee has independently considered all the issues and reached the same position as CSM. If there is a question mark, it is over the advice to have single vaccines."

The Chief Medical Officer, Professor Liam Donaldson said:

"We are very pleased to have this further confirmation from the two independent expert committees that the safety record of MMR is excellent. The safety of combined MMR is supported by a much greater body of evidence than the individual vaccines. The suggested practice of giving staggered doses of separate components has not had its safety or efficacy tested."

"Scare stories clearly worry parents but giving children separate vaccines unnecessarily exposes them to the risk of life-threatening infection. MMR remains the safest way to protect our children."

Much of the press reporting has been based on an as yet unpublished paper by Wakefield and Montgomery. We believe the paper will be published on 21 January 2001. When the final paper appears we will be writing to you with further information to deal with any new concerns that publication might raise. Whenever the final article appears a response will be found on each of the following web sites:

www.immunisation.org.uk

www.doh.gov.uk

www.open.gov.uk/mca

Contact: Dr David Salisbury 020 7972 1522 for any further questions about immunisation policy; and Dr June Raine 020 7273 0400 for any questions about licensing issues.

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