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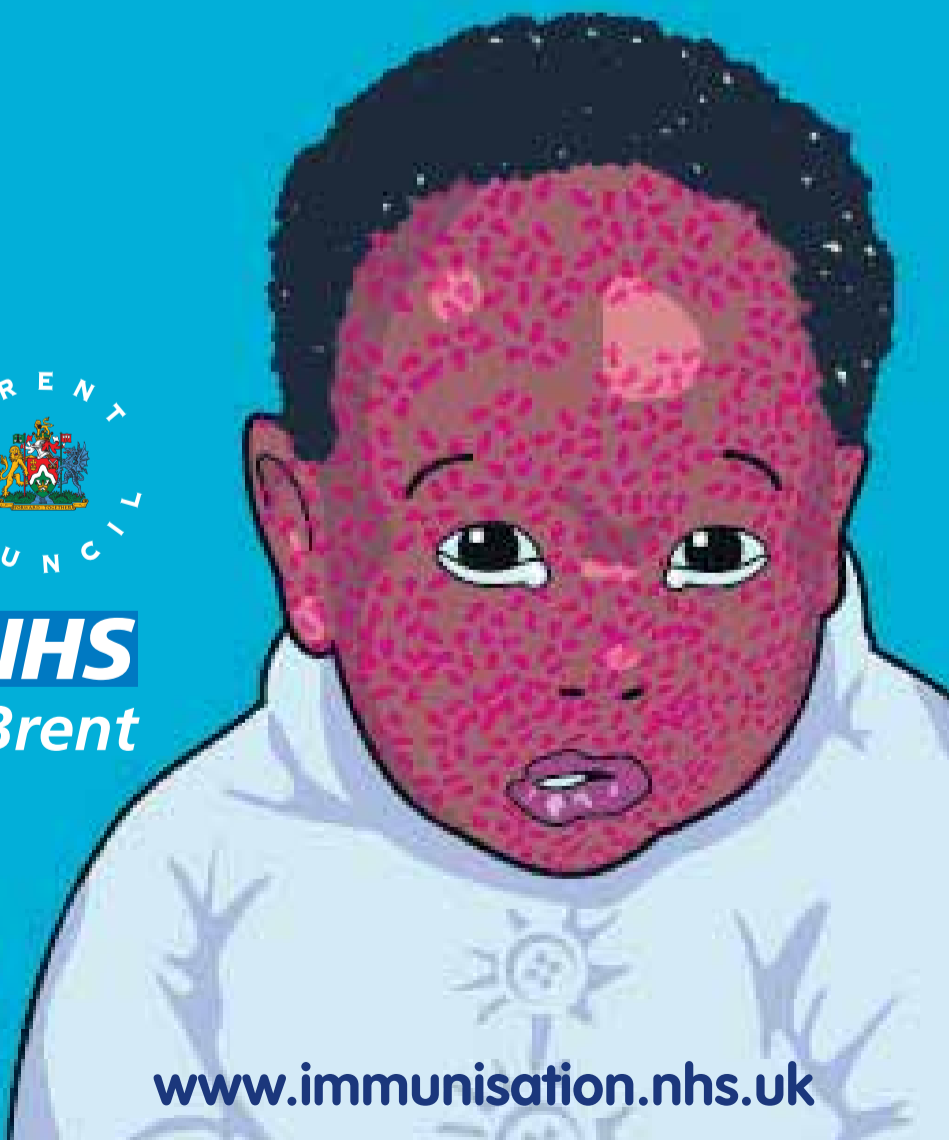
Myths, speculation and the truth about MMR

Measles is spreading in Brent

Don't let your child catch it
Here are the facts



NHS
Brent



www.immunisation.nhs.uk

by Jacqueline Asafu-Adjaye

Speculation around the link of MMR to autism and inflammatory bowel disease, may now get its final judgement, as the author of the controversial paper faces the prospect of being struck off, if the disciplinary charges against him are upheld by the General Medical Council, later next month.

Lead author Dr. Wakefield of the 1998 medical study that cast shadows over the safety of the triple Measles Mumps Rubella (MMR) jab, allegedly failed to conduct the research to the standards and terms set by the ethics committee.

Since 1998 urban myths, conspiracy theories, and uninformed public debates on the safety of MMR have fuelled parents' anxiety and distrust of the vaccine.

African and Caribbean children have borne the brunt, with boroughs such as Brent experiencing high incidence of outbreaks of measles. Dollis Hill, Harlesden, Kensal Green and Willesden Green have the highest reported number of measles cases for this totally preventable disease.

Your Voice Your Health shatters the top MMR myths:

Myth: MMR causes autism and bowel disease.

Fact: There is overwhelming evidence that MMR vaccine does not cause autism or inflammatory bowel disease (IBD).

Gillberg and Hejbel, 1998, Taylor et al., 1999; Davis et al., DeWilde et al., 2001 are amongst numerous studies that dispute any such link.

Myth: Getting protection by catching the disease is better for children than having the vaccine.

Fact: MMR immunisation is the safest way that parents can protect their children against serious diseases.

Myth: Children are too young to cope with the three jab vaccination. A single jab is safer.

Fact: Children receive more vaccines today than they did a century ago. The small pox vaccine unlike MMR contained about 200 viral proteins. Today's eleven routinely recommended vaccines: tetanus, pertussis, polio, measles, mumps, rubella, Hib, varicella, conjugate pneumococcus and hepatitis B contain less than 130 vaccine proteins.

Myth: Wakefield's studies sampled blood from both vaccinated and unvaccinated children.

Fact: The best way to determine whether MMR causes autism is through studying the incidence of autism in both vaccinated and unvaccinated children.

Myth: Giving the MMR vaccines separately reduces the risk of side effects.

Fact: Single vaccines in place of MMR put children and their families at increased and unnecessary risk. The combined vaccine is safer as it reduces the risk of children being infected with the diseases whilst waiting for full immunisation.

Myth: My child has already received one MMR jab so there is no need for a second one.

Fact: Two doses of MMR vaccine are needed to give children the best protection before they go to school. 90 per cent of those who did not respond to the first dose are protected in the second. Those with low antibodies after the first dose will be boosted.

Myth: It's safer not to vaccinate against Measles.

Fact: Measles can kill. MMR is safe.

Facts Source:
National Health Service

NEXT WEEK

Your Voice Your Health

looks at the supporters, campaigns and medics fighting to protect your children from measles.