

# Missing measles jab 'destroys immunity to other diseases'

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Failing to vaccinate against measles can "erase" children's immunity to other potentially fatal infections, scientists have warned.

Research suggests that infection with measles increases the risk of other diseases, such as flu, tetanus, whooping cough and rubella [German measles], for between two and three years.

The findings may help to explain why child deaths plummet when countries adopt the measles jab, with mortality rates falling much further than eradicating measles alone would predict.

"After surviving measles, children may fall ill or die from other infections that they previously developed immunity to — because this immunity is

'erased' by the measles virus," Michael Mina, of Harvard Medical School, said.

The findings are based in part on a study that followed more than 2,000 children who had measles in Britain. They were more likely to require GP visits and had higher rates of antibiotic prescriptions for up to five years after contracting the disease. The results were presented yesterday at a conference of the European Society of Clinical Microbiology in Bilbao.

Research led by Dr Mina suggests that measles infects a large proportion of the "memory cells" of the immune system, which can result in it failing to remember diseases it has fought off.

Public Health England has said that about 120,000 five-year-olds are not fully protected against measles.

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