

Measles information for primary and secondary school staff, students, and their parents

***Please circulate this information to staff and students and display on notice boards**

ARE YOUR STAFF AND STUDENTS PROTECTED AGAINST MEASLES? IF NOT, ACT NOW

Prepared by Annette Nesdale, RPH Medical Officer of Health, 14 March 2019

BACKGROUND:

There is a large and ongoing outbreak of measles in Christchurch, with 26 cases as at 14 March. Auckland and Dunedin have now also reported measles cases.

While there are currently no reported cases in the greater Wellington region, people will move around NZ during the **school holiday period** of 13 - 28 April, which includes Easter (19 April –22 April), and ANZAC Day (25 April), and it is likely measles will spread.

ACT FAST:

- Phone your local medical centre to arrange to be immunised if not protected.
- **Measles immunisation is free.**
- Don't delay: to be protected before the school holiday period, immunisation needs to occur by Saturday 30 March. This is because it takes ~ 14 days to develop protection after immunisation.

CHECK HERE TO SEE IF YOU ARE PROTECTED:

YEAR BORN?	PROTECTED?	RECOMMENDED ACTION
5 years to 19 years	Two documented doses of MMR = fully immunised for age.	Check immunisation
Born before 1 January 1969 in NZ	Yes, assumed protected as measles was common in NZ at this time.	No action required.

Born between 1969 and 1980 (inclusive) in NZ	Probably not – received only 1 measles vaccine which may have been given at 10 months of age when less effective.	Get a second MMR vaccine.
Born between 1981 to 1990 (inclusive)	Protected if you had two measles vaccines.	Check if you have had two measles vaccines. If in doubt, get a second MMR vaccine.
Born between 1991-1996 in NZ	People born 1991 to 1996 may not have had a second measles vaccine. This was when the second measles vaccine (MMR) was changed from 11 years to 4 years. Children aged five to 10 years at this time were offered catch up MMR vaccine through schools, but uptake and coverage was not high.	Check if you have had two measles vaccines. If in doubt, get a second MMR vaccine.
Born in NZ from 1 January 1997	Protected if you have had two measles vaccines – usually given at 12-15 months and then at four years.	Check if you have had two measles vaccines. If in doubt, get a second MMR vaccine.

IN BRIEF:

- **Adults** are considered protected if they have had doctor diagnosed measles, or a laboratory test confirming they are protected from measles, or two doses of a measles vaccine after 12 months of age. (Measles immunisation has been given at different ages since it was introduced in NZ in 1969.)
- **Children aged 15 months to four years** are considered immunised with one dose of MMR.
- **Children aged from four years** are considered immunised after two doses of MMR.

FAQS:

What is measles anyway?

Measles is a serious viral illness that:

- is highly infectious
- affects the respiratory system
- spreads easily through coughing or sneezing
- causes a skin rash NOTE: *People are most infectious in the five days before the rash appears.*
- causes fever
- results in one in 10 people in NZ to be hospitalised.

What are the symptoms of measles?

- begins with a fever
- progresses to a cough, runny nose
- sore, red eyes (usually within 2-4 days)
- rash appears 2-4 days after the first symptoms; begins at the hairline, gradually spreads down the body to the arms and legs.
- rash lasts up to one week. NOTE: People are most infectious in the five days before the rash appears.
- usually takes 10-12 days from exposure to the first symptom.

Is measles a risk during pregnancy?

Yes. Measles during pregnancy increases the risk of miscarriage, premature labour and low birth-weight in babies.

What if I'm not sure if I'm immunised?

If you're not sure how many doses you have had, talk to your doctor as the information may be in your medical records. You may also have your own health records e.g. your Plunket or Well Child/Tamariki Ora book. If it's still unclear whether you are protected, or have had two doses, vaccination is recommended. Check with your doctor first as in some instances, such as pregnancy, you should not be immunised.

What is 'fully vaccinated' for adults?

Adults are considered protected if they have had doctor or laboratory confirmed measles, or two doses of a measles vaccine after 12 months of age. Measles immunisation has been given at different ages since it was introduced in NZ in 1969.

What is 'fully vaccinated' for children?

Children aged 15 months to four years are fully immunised with one dose of MMR. After four years, two doses of MMR means full immunisation.

Where can I get more information?

- [Regional Public Health](http://www.rph.org.nz) - www.rph.org.nz
- [Ministry of Health](http://www.health.govt.nz) - www.health.govt.nz
- [Immunisation Advisory Centre](http://www.immune.org.nz) - www.immune.org.nz