

Measles information for secondary schools

- There have been 12 confirmed cases of measles in Auckland so far this year (2019), as well as further cases in other parts of New Zealand.
- Measles is a highly infectious viral illness that can be very serious.
- It is important to know if anyone at your school is unimmunised and at risk of catching the disease or developing complications, and to be vigilant in watching for symptoms.
- There are also measles outbreaks around the world. With school holidays coming up, some families may be travelling, then returning to your school – please refer to the travel advice below.
- You will need to take action (see below) if a student or staff member is suspected of having measles, or has been in close contact with someone with measles.

Please familiarise yourself with the following information:

What is measles?

Measles is a serious and highly infectious viral disease that can make people very sick and can lead to hospitalisation or, in rare cases, death. It is very easily spread from person to person through the air by breathing, sneezing or coughing. Just being in the same room as someone with measles can lead to infection if you are not immunised. If you are unimmunised you can also have measles and spread it without knowing it.

What are the symptoms of measles?

Measles symptoms include a high fever, runny nose, cough and sore red eyes, followed several days later by a rash starting behind the ears and spreading to the body. **If you catch measles you can spread it to others from 5 days before until 5 days after the rash appears.**

Who is at risk of measles?

Young children who have not yet been immunised are at greatest risk of the disease, but unimmunised older children, teenagers and adults, especially pregnant women (measles can result in miscarriage, premature labour and low birth weight), are also at risk.

- Pregnant women who were not immunised before becoming pregnant **should not** receive the immunisation in pregnancy and should seek medical advice if they are concerned they have come in contact with measles.
- If you are of child-bearing age, you should avoid pregnancy for one month after having a dose of the MMR vaccine.

- If you are breastfeeding (and not pregnant) you can receive the MMR vaccine safely.

For children who are too young to have had the measles vaccine it is advisable that others living in their household are vaccinated.

How is measles prevented?

The best way to prevent measles is for all children to be immunised on time, with the free Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR) vaccine at 15 months and four years old. One dose of MMR vaccine is 95% effective against measles and two doses are 99% effective. Older children and teenagers who are unimmunised can also receive the vaccine for free.

Adults/staff who are unsure whether they are immune should talk to their doctor as the information may be in their medical records. They may also have their own health records, such as their Plunket or Well Child/Tamariki Ora book. Anyone younger than 50 years old who has **not had one MMR dose** should be vaccinated.

What to do if you believe a student or staff member at your school has measles:

- A student or staff member showing the symptoms described above should be sent home.
- The person should be isolated immediately until they leave the premises
- The student or staff member will need to be assessed by a doctor before returning to school. It's important that they call before visiting the doctor to avoid spreading the virus in the waiting room.

Any staff member or student with confirmed measles will need to be excluded (see below) and stay at home in isolation from the time they become ill until five days after their rash has appeared. It is extremely important to stay in isolation to protect people at risk, such as pregnant women and those with weakened immune systems.

What should you do if a student or staff member has been in contact with measles?

If a student or staff member has shared the same air as someone who has measles, they are a 'close contact'. **If the close contact is not immune, they may get the disease.**

- Close contacts who are not immune should be **excluded** (see below) from your school. **Auckland Regional Public Health Service will work with you to provide advice and guidance about the actions your school should take.**
- It can take 7-14 days for a contact who has become infected with measles to start having symptoms. **You can spread the illness to others during this time.**

What happens if you need to exclude a student or staff member from school?

Students and staff members exposed to measles may need to be excluded from school to protect the health of others and stop the disease from spreading. **Auckland Regional Public Health Service will work with you to provide advice and guidance in this situation.** Anyone who is excluded will need to stay at home in quarantine.

- Anyone who is excluded from your school is required by law to stay at home in quarantine (Health Act 1956).
- Quarantine means the student or staff member remains at home away from other people. Those in quarantine cannot attend school, work, social activities, sports/recreation events. They should not use public transport or visit public places such as movie theatres or shopping malls.
- Being in quarantine means you will not spread the infection to others if you get the disease while at home.

Travel advice

The Ministry of Health is advising people travelling overseas to make sure they are fully immunised against measles before they go. Measles is regularly brought into the New Zealand through international travel. There are currently significant measles outbreaks overseas, including in the Philippines and in some European countries.

If you haven't been immunised, you should be cautious about travelling to any countries where there are serious measles outbreaks. An up-to-date list of countries with a measles outbreak can be found on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website: <https://www.cdc.gov/measles/travelers.html>

Infection control and cleaning

If you have a confirmed case of measles at your school, no special cleaning is required. This is because the measles virus has a short survival time (less than 2 hours) and is rapidly inactivated by heat and sunlight. Measles is highly infectious because it is spread directly from person to person - not because it is picked up from other objects. However, you can choose, if you wish, to clean with any broad spectrum disinfectant (e.g., Vircon, Viraclean, Clinell) or a 0.5% bleach (sodium hypochlorite) solution.

For more information:

- [Auckland Regional Public Health Service website measles page](#)
- [Ministry of Health website measles page](#)
- [Immunisation Advisory Centre website](#) or Freephone: 0800 IMMUNE
- Healthline, for free advice: 0800 611 116