

Measles information for Early Learning Services

- Measles is a highly infectious viral illness that can be very serious.
- It's important to know the immunisation status of your staff and children so you're aware who may be at risk of the disease. Now is a good time to check that your immunisation register is up to date, and watch for symptoms.
- There are measles outbreaks around the world, so if families are travelling, please refer them to the travel advice below.
- You will need to take action (see below) if a child or staff member is suspected of having measles, or has been in close contact with someone with measles.

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 a person is not immunised. Anyone who is not immune can 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. **Someone with measles 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. It's important they have their vaccines on time at 15 months and four years old. For children who are too young to have had the measles vaccine it is advisable that others living in their household are vaccinated. The vaccine is free.

Unimmunised older children, teenagers and adults are also at risk from the disease, and especially pregnant women as it can result in miscarriage, premature labour and low birth weight babies.

- 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.
- Women 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.

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.

Adults and staff who are unsure of their immunity should talk to their doctor. 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 immediately and then have a second vaccination a month later.

What to do if you believe a child or staff member at your service has measles:

- A child or staff member showing the symptoms described above should be sent home
- The person should be isolated immediately until they leave the premises
- The child or staff member will need to be assessed by a doctor before returning to your service. They should call before visiting the doctor to avoid spreading the virus in the waiting room.

Any staff member or child 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 to do if a child or staff member has been in contact with measles:

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

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

What to do if a child or staff member needs to be excluded:

Children and staff members exposed to measles may need to be excluded from your service to protect the health of others and stop the disease from spreading. **Auckland Regional Public Health Service will provide advice and guidance in this situation.**

- Anyone excluded from your service is required by law to stay at home in **quarantine** (Health Act 1956)
- Quarantine means the child or staff member remains at home away from other people. Those in quarantine cannot attend early childhood education centres, school, work, social activities, sports and recreation events. They should not use public transport or visit public places such as movie theatres or shopping malls.
- Being in quarantine stops someone spreading measles to others if they become infectious.
- Those who need to be excluded will need to go into quarantine seven days after their last exposure to the measles case and stay there for 14 days. If a person is going to develop the illness it will occur within this time period.

Overseas travel advice for staff and families

The Ministry of Health is advising people travelling overseas to make sure they are fully vaccinated against measles before they go. Children who have not yet been vaccinated are at greatest risk of the disease. The Ministry of Health recommends that:

- Infants aged 6 - 15 months travelling to countries with serious measles outbreaks have an MMR vaccine before their travel. This is an additional vaccination for those infants – they will still need their usual MMR vaccinations at 15 months and four years old.

If you haven't been vaccinated, 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 service, no special cleaning of toys is required – you can continue your normal toy-cleaning process. This is because the measles virus has a short survival time (less than 2 hours) and is rapidly inactivated by heat and sunlight.

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