

Managing measles in schools

Measles is a highly infectious viral illness that can be very serious. Auckland Regional Public Health Service (ARPHS) will work with you to manage any measles cases at your school.

- Any child or staff member at your school who is suspected of having measles must be sent home until they are seen by a doctor. If measles is confirmed, they must remain at home away from any visitors, unless these visitors are known to be immune.
- If the case is confirmed with measles, ARPHS will ask your school for the details of any **close contacts** – those who have been in a confined space with the measles case.
- ARPHS will then advise **close contacts** (staff and children) to stay at home if they are not immune, and check for symptoms until the end of the quarantine period. This might be one to two weeks depending on when they were exposed to measles.
- ARPHS will also contact anyone at your school considered **at high risk** from measles, such as non immune pregnant women, babies under 15 months old or anyone with a weakened immune system.

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 on the face and neck before spreading to the rest of the body. Someone with measles can spread it to others from five days before the rash appears until five days after.

What do you do if you have a suspected case of measles at your school?

If you suspect measles because a student or staff member has a fever, rash or a number of the symptoms above, **isolate them away from others and send them home.**

The student or staff member will need to see a doctor and be cleared of measles before they can return to your school. **It's important that they, or their caregiver, ring ahead to let the health centre, hospital or A&E clinic know so they can be isolated** on arrival.

If the student or staff member is confirmed as having measles, they will need to stay at home **in isolation until five days after their rash first appeared.** Families and staff members can find [Information for people with measles](#), [People exposed to measles: Information for close contacts](#) and [What is quarantine?](#) on [ARPHS' website](#).

Could others at school be at risk?

You do not need to take further action unless ARPHS tells you there has been a clinically confirmed measles case at your school. The service will discuss with you who is a **close contact** – someone who has been in a confined space with the person with measles.

Staff and students are at risk of catching measles if they have **a) been in a confined space with the case AND b) are not immune** (see definitions over the page).

ARPHS will provide advice to **close contacts** on immunity, symptoms and quarantine.

Who is immune?

<i>People are immune and not at risk of measles if they...</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have had one (ideally two) doses of <u>Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR) vaccine</u> documented in a Well Child/Tamariki Ora book or by a doctor.• Were born before 1969, as they would very likely have had measles as a student• Have been diagnosed with measles before• Have had a blood test confirming immunity
<i>People are not immune or are at risk of measles if they...</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have had no doses of MMR vaccine• Have a weakened immune system• Have had a blood test that confirms they are not immune• Are currently pregnant and not known to be immune

Those at greater risk from measles

Please identify **anyone at your school who is at high risk** from measles. ARPHS will contact them and suggest they seek medical advice. This includes –

- Pregnant women. Non-immune women who get measles in pregnancy could have a miscarriage, premature labour or low birth weight babies. Women **should not** receive the MMR vaccination while pregnant.
- People with weakened immune systems from illness (e.g. cancer) or from certain treatments or medicines.

What is quarantine?

A number of people may be advised to stay home from your school for one to two weeks after they have been exposed to measles. These may include:

- Child or adult **close contacts who are not immune**
- Anyone suspected of having measles but waiting for test results.

This is to prevent further spread of measles and to protect those who might get serious complications.

Infection control

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.

What else do I need to do at my school?

- Inform parents and caregivers that there has been a case of measles. The only people who need to stay at home in quarantine, however, are those who are born after 1 Jan 1969, are not immune or cannot demonstrate immunity, or those who have a weakened immune system.
- Inform parents and staff about symptoms of measles so they can watch out for the illness
- Encourage parents and staff who are unsure about vaccination to see their GP.
- Ensure your school's Immunisation Register is up to date if you are required to have one.

For more information:

- Auckland Regional Public Health Service: www.arphs.health.nz
- Immunisation Advisory Centre: www.immune.org.nz (0800 IMMUNE – 0800 466 863)
- Healthline, for free health advice: 0800 611 116