

# Quick guide to measles

## IMPORTANT NOTE - October 2019

### Temporary management of MMR vaccine in metropolitan Auckland

The supply of MMR vaccine (Measles Mumps Rubella) has been limited in Auckland since 20 September 2019. This is the result of high demand for MMR during the current measles outbreak.

To ensure current vaccine supply is available to protect the most vulnerable in our community, the three District Health Boards (Waitematā, Auckland and Counties Manukau) and seven Primary Health Organisations in Auckland have agreed temporary priorities for vaccine delivery.

These priorities are updated as new supplies of MMR0 become available.

**As at 21 October 2019, the current priorities for MMR vaccine in Auckland are -**

- Babies between 6 and 11 months can be vaccinated.
- Vaccinating children at 12 months and at 4 years is also a priority
- Anyone under the age of 30 years without any recorded MMR vaccinations, with priority within this age group given to -
  - Pacific and Māori people
  - School and tertiary students
  - New mothers and family members of newborn babies (up to 6 months)
  - Teachers and early childhood educators
- People aged 30-49 can also have their first MMR vaccination if they
  - Work in a high risk institution, such as a prison
  - Are in one of the priority groups above – teachers or new mothers.
- Anyone who is aged over 30 and is not in one of these priority groups (above) is currently **not** a priority for vaccination.
- If you are 50 years of age or older, you are very likely to have natural immunity to measles.

We know that having to wait for an MMR vaccination may cause concern for people outside of these priority groups. As more vaccine arrives in New Zealand we will be able to vaccinate a wider group of people.

These priorities replace all previous advice around vaccination in this document (including in previous versions).

## What is measles?

Measles is a virus that can make adults and children very sick. It is highly infectious and can spread quickly and easily through breathing, sneezing and coughing. If you are not immune to measles, you can catch the disease just by being in the same room as someone who has it.

## How serious is measles?

Measles can lead to hospitalisation, serious complications (such as pneumonia and swelling of the brain) or, in rare cases, death. It is especially dangerous for [pregnant women who are not immune, babies and people with weakened immune systems](#).

## What are the symptoms of measles?

Measles **symptoms include a high fever, runny nose, cough and sore red eyes**. A few days later a **rash starts on the face and neck, and then spreads to the rest of the body**. You can have measles and spread it to others *before* you feel sick or show any symptoms.

## What should I do if I think I or a family member has measles?

If you think you have measles, it's important to see a doctor. But **ring before visiting your doctor** to let them know you think you may have measles. When you get to the health centre or hospital, stay in the car and call (or send in whoever is with you) to say you've arrived. This will help avoid spreading the virus in the waiting room. You can also call **Healthline for free health advice: 0800 611 116**. Healthline operates 24/7 and has a translator service available.

## How can I protect myself and my family against measles?

Please see the note at the front on current MMR vaccination priorities.

The best protection against measles is to be vaccinated with the measles, mumps, rubella ([MMR](#)) vaccine. One dose of MMR will protect around 95% of people, while two doses protect around 99% of people. In New Zealand, the MMR vaccine is routinely given to children at 15 months and four years old, but during the current Auckland outbreak, babies are able to get an MMR vaccine aged between 6 and 11 months, and then the scheduled MMR vaccinations in Auckland are at 12 months and four years. The vaccine is free for everyone aged 12 months to 50 years. If you were born from 1 January 1969 (either in New Zealand or overseas) you are likely to have had the disease as a child and therefore already be immune.

It can take around two weeks for a person to be fully immune after being vaccinated.

## What will happen if I do have measles?

**[If you catch measles](#), you should stay at home (isolation) for five days after your rash appears**. This means you can recover, and you also won't spread the illness. **You can spread measles to others from five days before until five days after your rash appears**.

## I'm not sure if I've been vaccinated. What should I do?

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 you can't find your records, vaccination is recommended. If you were born before 1 January 1969, you are likely to have had the disease as a child and therefore be immune.

## What do I do if I've only had one of the two MMR vaccine doses?

One dose of measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine protects about 95 per cent of people, and two doses protect about 99 percent. People born between around 1990 and 2005 are less likely to have been fully vaccinated as children. If you're unsure of your vaccination status you can check your Well Child/Tamariki Ora or Plunket book, or contact your doctor. If you can't find your records, vaccination is recommended.

Please see the note at the front on current MMR vaccination priorities.

## If I've been in contact with someone with measles, how long will it be before I know if I've caught it?

It usually takes 10 to 14 days for someone who has caught measles to start showing symptoms. [If you have been near someone with measles](#), and don't know if you're immune, seek medical advice immediately and remain in quarantine at home. Calculate your quarantine period using the [calculator on the ARPHS website](#).

## I'm pregnant. Am I at risk?

Most pregnant women will be immune to measles. Non-immune women who become ill with measles while pregnant are at risk of miscarriage, premature labour and low birth weight infants. For more information, see the [Measles and pregnancy Q and As](#).

## Where can I seek advice or find out more about measles?

**Free phone Healthline on 0800 611 116** or visit:

- The Ministry of Health website – [www.health.govt.nz](http://www.health.govt.nz)
- The Auckland Regional Public Health Service website – [www.arphs.health.nz](http://www.arphs.health.nz)
- The Immunisation Advisory Centre website – [www.immune.org.nz](http://www.immune.org.nz) (or free phone 0800 466 863)

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