

Infectious disease outbreak preparedness in schools and ECEs

Health New Zealand
Te Whatu Ora

A guide to managing infectious diseases for schools, early childhood education and care centres, Kura kaupapa Māori, Kōhanga Reo, and language nests.

This guide is intended for schools, early childhood education and care centres (ECEs), kura kaupapa Māori, Kōhanga Reo and language nests. It provides information on serious infectious diseases you may come into contact with and what actions may be required to stop them spreading.

It covers influenza, gastroenteritis illnesses (including norovirus), measles, meningococcal disease, mumps and pertussis (whooping cough).

For each of these information is provided on:

- Common symptoms and how the illness spreads
- How to protect your community and prevent illness
- What to do if someone has the disease or illness (or if you suspect they have it)
- Where to find more information

Specific guidance on COVID-19 is available separately from: [info.health.nz/conditions-treatments/infectious-diseases/covid-19/if-you-have-covid-19/](https://www.health.govt.nz/our-health-system/public-health/communicable-diseases/covid-19/if-you-have-covid-19)

Infectious (communicable) diseases

are ones which can be spread from one person to another, most commonly through coughing, sneezing, or through contamination of food, drinks, surfaces and objects (including drinking bottles and vapes) by someone who has the disease.

Notifiable diseases

are diseases or illnesses which must be notified to a Medical Officer of Health (a Public Health Doctor) by other health practitioners and laboratories.

If someone has a notifiable disease and there was a risk of them passing it on to others at your education setting, then public health may contact you so together you can prevent any further spread of the disease.

Knowing if a child is well enough to be at school

Health New Zealand – Te Whatu ora has released guidance for parents and school leaders on when it is okay for a child to still be at school and when an unwell child should be at home.

Guidance for schools: www.hpa.org.nz/keeping-healthy/healthy-homes-environments/keeping-if-a-child-is-well-enough-to-be-at-school-guidance-for-schools

Guidance for parents & carers: [info.health.nz/pregnancy-children/childhood-conditions/keeping-if-your-child-is-well-enough-to-go-to-school-guidance-for-parents](https://www.health.govt.nz/our-health-system/public-health/communicable-diseases/keeping-your-child-well-enough-to-go-to-school-guidance-for-parents)

Your role as kaitātaki for your community

As an education provider you play a key role in keeping your community safe. This may include promoting preventative measures and supporting the management of infectious disease outbreaks which may occur on your premises or among tamariki, students and staff (kaimahi).

Key things you need to know:

- School principals (of State Schools) can preclude a student from attending if they believe on reasonable grounds they may have a communicable disease (using Section 77 of the Education and Training Act 2020)
- Medical Officers of Health have certain powers to manage notifiable diseases on a case-by-case basis

If someone who you believe has a communicable disease does not stay away from your service or school as requested, you can contact the local medical officer of health for advice and support.

If you require further advice contact your regional public health service:

www.tewhatauora.govt.nz/our-health-system/health-sector-organisations/public-health-contacts/

For Ministry of Education guidance on managing infectious disease cases in schools visit: www.education.govt.nz/education-professionals/schools-year-0-13/health-and-safety/managing-infectious-disease-cases-schools



Top tips and healthy habits for keeping tamariki, students and staff safe



Encourage immunisation against infectious diseases

Immunisation is a key way of preventing some infectious diseases. Immunisations are offered to pēpi (babies), tamariki, rangatahi (teenagers) and adults at various ages to protect against serious and preventable diseases.

You can see what these include and when people should get them from:

info.health.nz/immunisations/vaccines-aotearoa/

To protect your community, you can encourage staff and parents of students to check if they and their whānau are fully immunised. If they're not sure they can check with their family doctor or hauora provider.



Keep your immunisation register updated

Primary schools and ECEs are required to keep an immunisation register. This helps to:

- Provide an ongoing record of vaccine status for tamariki
- Encourage completion of any outstanding immunisations
- Provide a reminder for parents or guardians to catch up with their child's immunisations

Staff

- While there is no legal requirement for ECE or schools to keep information on the immunisation status of their workforce, staff should be encouraged to hold a personal record of their immunisations. For some infectious disease outbreaks having proof of immunity speeds up contact tracing efforts by public health and means individuals can remain at work even if they are disease contacts.

International students

- International students will provide their immunisation records to their school on enrolment, and these may be required by public health in the event of an outbreak.



Encourage everyone to keep their hands clean

Washing or sanitising your hands is one of the easiest ways to keep yourself and others safe. By keeping your hands clean, you can prevent the spread of illness.

It's important to remind tamariki, students and staff to wash their hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds, and to dry them completely. In particular, people should always wash their hands:

- After going to the toilet or changing nappies
- After carrying out any cleaning
- After coughing or sneezing
- Before preparing food or drinks
- Before eating and drinking

Handwashing is especially important if there is an outbreak of a communicable disease. Young children may need to have handwashing supervised during a norovirus or gastroenteritis outbreak.

Alcohol-based hand sanitiser is also effective at killing many germs and viruses. If using hand sanitiser, make sure you use enough product to cover your hands, rub it in and allow it to dry.



Encourage people to stay at home if they're sick

It is important people stay at home if they are unwell to stop the spread of infection to others.

An information sheet on common infectious diseases, how they are spread, and signs and symptoms is available on the HealthEd website: healthed.govt.nz/products/infectious-diseases-1



Remind everyone to cover coughs and sneezes

Some infectious diseases can be transferred in the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

Encouraging people to cover their coughs and sneezes can help prevent illnesses spreading to other people. People should:

- Cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when they cough or sneeze – then put the tissue in a bin
- If they do not have a tissue, they should cough or sneeze into their elbow
- Clean their hands after they cover a cough or sneeze



Ensure good ventilation

Good ventilation helps remove virus and bacterial particles in the air. It's recommended that you let in fresh air every day.

If you can, partly open a window about 5cm for most of the day. Or open windows for at least 15 minutes as often as possible, if it is safe to do so.

If your windows do not open, or you cannot open them safely, and you have a ventilation system, check if your ventilation system filters (cleans) the air.

For more information visit:

- Ventilation in ECEs: www.education.govt.nz/early-childhood/running-a-service/ventilation-in-early-learning-services/
- Ventilation in schools: www.education.govt.nz/our-work/information-releases/issue-specific-releases/ventilation-in-school/



Maintain rigorous cleaning and disinfection practices

Some infectious diseases and illnesses can be spread by touching a surface or object that has been contaminated by an infected person.

Maintaining rigorous cleaning and disinfection practices is the best way to stop diseases spreading in this way.

Specific cleaning guidance for ECEs is available from the Licencing criteria for ECEs:

www.education.govt.nz/early-childhood/licensing-and-regulations/the-regulatory-framework-for-ece/licensing-criteria/centre-based-ece-services/health-and-safety/



Gastroenteritis illnesses including norovirus

Gastroenteritis (tummy bug) illnesses can cause diarrhoea and vomiting, and are usually caused by viral or bacterial infections. Common gastroenteritis illnesses in ECEs and schools are caused by norovirus, E. coli, campylobacter and salmonella.

Symptoms

The main symptoms of gastroenteritis illnesses are diarrhoea and vomiting.

Other symptoms can include:



Stomach pain



Cramping



Fever



Nausea



Blood in your poo (faeces)



Loss of appetite



Headaches

Depending on the cause, symptoms may appear within a few hours to a couple of weeks after infection. The illness can range from mild to severe. Symptoms usually last one or two days, but can occasionally last for up to 10 days.

How they spread

Viral gastroenteritis (e.g. norovirus) is highly infectious, and large numbers of people can be affected in a short amount of time. It spreads very easily from person to person, by contact with the vomit or faeces (poo) of an infected person. This could be from shaking hands with someone who has been sick and has the virus on their hands, or from contaminated (unsafe) objects like door handles and cutlery, toys and food and drink. Norovirus is particularly hardy and can live on surfaces for long periods of time. You can also get norovirus from breathing in the virus particles from the vomit of someone who has it, for example when cleaning up.

People usually get bacterial gastroenteritis (e.g. E. coli) by eating or drinking food or water that is contaminated with the bacteria. Bacterial gastroenteritis is less easily passed from person to person, but large numbers of people may become affected from contaminated food or water, for example from raw chicken or contaminated tank water.



How to reduce the risk of gastroenteritis spreading

Careful handwashing, proper food hygiene, and rigorous cleaning and disinfection processes are all key to stopping the spread of gastroenteritis illnesses. If you have had an outbreak of gastro at your school or ECE it's particularly important to:

- Remind tamariki, students, staff and visitors to your ECE or school about the importance of hand hygiene, and use soap to wash their hands as alcohol-based hand sanitising gel does not completely inactivate norovirus. You can also consider supervising handwashing for young children at ECEs
- Make sure bathroom facilities are properly equipped with soap and paper towels, or clean, dry, hand towels
- Make sure the right cleaning products are used in the right way, ensuring rigorous cleaning and disinfection schedules
- Ensure food is prepared and stored properly, as per the guidelines from New Zealand Food Safety: www.mpi.govt.nz/food-safety-home/preparing-and-storing-food-safely-at-home/

If an individual at your school or ECE has gastroenteritis symptoms

If someone is unwell with gastroenteritis symptoms (e.g. feeling or being sick; diarrhoea; stomach cramps; low-grade fever; chills and muscle aches) you should:

- 1 Isolate them away from others
- 2 Arrange for them to be collected and taken home by their parent or carer
- 3 Advise them not to return until at least 48 hours after their symptoms stop

If they require health advice they should contact their doctor or usual hauora provider. They can also call Healthline anytime on 0800 611 116.

People with gastroenteritis should also stay away from swimming pools and water play areas such as splash pads for at least 2 weeks after their symptoms stop.

If two or more people at your school or ECE have gastroenteritis symptoms

If multiple people have gastroenteritis symptoms at the same time or in quick succession, then you may be experiencing an outbreak.

You should alert your local public health service so they can guidance on how to stop the outbreak spreading: www.tewhatauora.govt.nz/our-health-system/health-sector-organisations/public-health-contacts/

In the Auckland region you can fill in a notification form to directly alert your public health service: www.arphs.health.nz/public-health-topics/early-childhood-education-centre-assessments/notification-of-a-suspected-gastro-or-respiratory-outbreak-in-an-ecc-or-kohanga/

Cleaning up

You should also carefully clean up any areas that may have been contaminated by the sick person. This includes any vomit and diarrhoea, toilets and nappy change areas, as well as food, drink, objects, surfaces and toys they may have touched or come into contact with.

When cleaning up:

- Always wear personal protective equipment such as gloves and an apron
- Clean up vomit or faeces first with a detergent solution, then a solution of household chlorine bleach
- Items like blankets and bedding should be washed using detergent and hot water
- Open windows and doors to direct airflow to the exterior of the building
- After finishing clean hands thoroughly with soap and water for 20 seconds, then dry them on a clean, dry towel or disposable paper towel for a further 20 seconds

For more information

For more information on diarrhoea and vomiting in adults visit: info.health.nz/conditions-treatments/stomach-and-bowel/diarrhoea-and-vomiting-in-adults-gastroenteritis/

For specific information on norovirus visit: info.health.nz/conditions-treatments/stomach-and-bowel/norovirus/



Influenza

The flu (influenza) is a virus that spreads quickly between people. Flu causes symptoms like a fever, runny nose, cough or upset stomach. There can be different types or strains of flu that can make you sick each year. You can easily catch the flu even if you are fit and healthy.

Symptoms

Symptoms of flu start suddenly and can include:



Fever or feeling feverish



Chills



Muscle or body aches



Headache



Runny or stuffy nose



Cough



Sore throat



Upset stomach, vomiting or runny poos (diarrhoea)

It can take between 1 to 4 days to feel symptoms after you catch the flu. The worst symptoms usually last about 5 days, but coughing can last up to 2 to 3 weeks.

How it spreads

Flu (influenza) spreads quickly from person to person through touch and through droplets in the air. This includes:

- Direct contact with people who have flu
- Contact with surfaces that have the flu virus on them
- Coughing
- Sneezing
- Talking

Adults are most likely to be contagious in the first 3 to 5 days of illness. Young tamariki can be contagious for more than 5 days.

Flu symptoms can be similar to other illnesses like COVID-19 or meningococcal disease.

If you suspect someone has meningococcal disease, seek urgent medical attention. This is a very serious illness that can make people very sick quite suddenly.

Young tamariki and rangatahi have a higher risk of catching and passing on meningococcal disease.

For more information on meningococcal disease visit: info.health.nz/conditions-treatments/infectious-diseases/meningococcal-disease/

Protecting against the flu

To protect your school and ECE communities, encourage staff, parents, caregivers and whānau to get the influenza vaccination. It's available from most GPs and pharmacies, and it's free for lots of groups. People can learn more by visiting: info.health.nz/immunisations/vaccines-aotearoa/flu-influenza-vaccine/

As with other viruses, it's also important to keep up good hygiene practices, especially during winter when the flu is more common. Encourage children, students, staff and their whānau to:

- Stay home if they're sick
- Stay away from others who are sick
- Wear a mask if they have symptoms or are worried about getting sick
- Use disposable tissues
- Cover coughs and sneezes and wash their hands after blowing their nose or a child's
- Not share drinks, vapes or utensils such as cutlery



Across your facility you should also:

- 1 Frequently clean and disinfect surfaces, especially high-touch surfaces like door handles, table and bench tops, toys and light switches
- 2 Keep indoor spaces well ventilated, e.g. open windows

if someone has symptoms

Staff and children who are sick with influenza should be sent home. They should only return once they are fully recovered and no longer infectious to others. If they need medical advice they should contact their doctor or Hauora provider. They can also call Healthline anytime on 0800 611 116. In an emergency people should call 111.

Please note that influenza is not a notifiable disease and therefore does not need to be reported to public health.

People should seek urgent medical attention if symptoms are severe, for example difficulty breathing or chest pain, seizures or convulsions, a high fever that doesn't come down (especially amongst pregnant people), purple or bluish discolouration to the lips, skin, fingers or toes.

You should also seek medical help for babies and young children who are:

- Breathing fast or noisily, or if they are grunting or wheezing
- Very pale
- Drowsy or difficult to wake
- Severely irritable, not wanting to be held
- Limp, unable to move
- Have dry nappies or no tears when crying (this means they are dehydrated)

In addition, seek urgent medical attention if children are showing signs of other serious conditions like meningococcal disease. This may include:

- Severe headache
- Stiff neck
- Dislike of bright lights
- A rash
- Non-specific symptoms such as sleepiness and vomiting

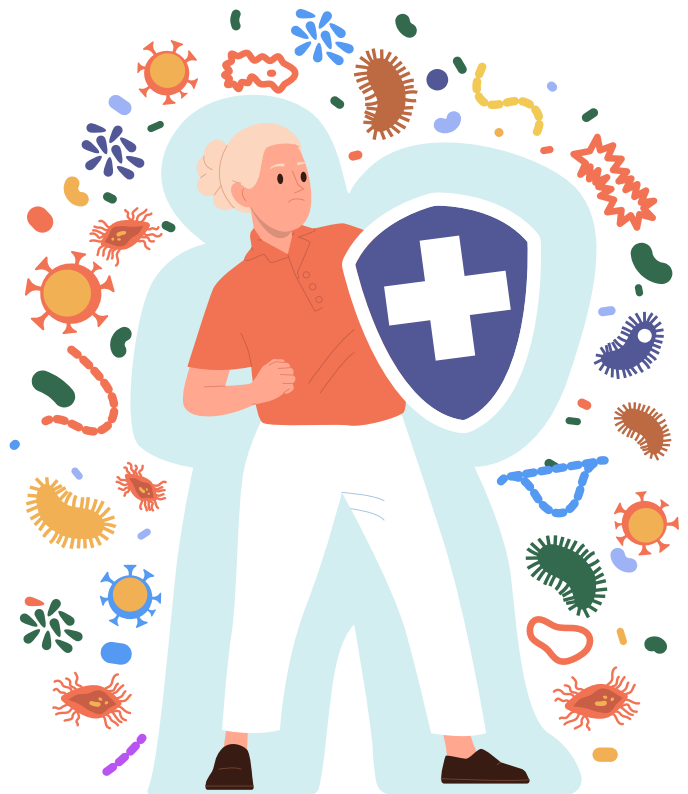
For more information

For more information on the flu visit:

info.health.nz/conditions-treatments/infectious-diseases/flu-influenza/

For more information on the flu vaccine visit:

info.health.nz/immunisations/vaccines-aotearoa/flu-influenza-vaccine/



Measles

Measles is a serious and highly contagious disease. It can cause serious health problems, including brain swelling, chest infections, or death. The measles vaccine is very effective at preventing measles.

Symptoms

Measles symptoms can start 7 to 18 days after you are infected with the virus. The symptoms usually start within 10 days.

The first symptoms of measles are:



Cough



Fever



Runny nose



Sore red eyes

This is then followed by a red or dark pink rash. The rash spots are blotchy and join together. It usually starts on the face or behind the ears 3 days after the first symptoms, before moving down the body.



Measles makes people feel very unwell. Tamariki can be in bed for up to 5 days and will likely to be too sick to go to school for at least 2 weeks. To avoid passing the virus on to others people with measles are required to stay home in isolation. Public Health will contact anyone with measles about how long they need to stay at home.

Up to 1 in 3 people with measles develop complications. They are usually:

- Tamariki under 5
- Adults over 20
- People with weakened immune systems

How measles spreads

Measles spreads through coughing and sneezing. It is much more contagious than other viruses such as COVID-19.

You can easily give measles to someone who is not immune* to the virus from 4 days before the rash appears until 4 days after the rash starts.

**People are considered immune to measles if they have had two documented doses of a measles vaccine after the age of 12 months; were born before 1969; have documented immunity from a blood test, or have had measles.*



Protecting against measles

The best protection against measles is the free measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine. This is given to children at 12 and 15 months old, but lots of tamariki missed out on their vaccine during the past few years, and others may not have had it if they were born overseas or are now aged between 18 to 33 years.

The measles (MMR) vaccine is free for all children age 18 and under in NZ, and all adults over the age of 18 who are eligible for free NZ healthcare.

Immunisation is extra important if you are planning to travel overseas. It protects you and helps prevent outbreaks in New Zealand.

To learn more about the vaccine visit: info.health.nz/immunisations/vaccines-aotearoa/measles-mumps-and-rubella-mmr-vaccine/

If you suspect someone may have measles

If someone has measles-like symptoms you should:

- 1 Isolate them away from other students and staff so they do not risk passing on the virus
- 2 Arrange for them to be picked up and taken home by their parent or carer
- 3 Call your local public health service for further advice: www.tewhatauora.govt.nz/our-health-system/health-sector-organisations/public-health-contacts/

It is important the person's parent or carer calls their family doctor or Hauora provider as soon as possible. They can also call Healthline for free anytime on 0800 611 116.

In an emergency do not delay – call 111 and tell the operator the person may have measles.

If someone is confirmed as having measles

If someone who was at your ECE or school is confirmed as having measles Public Health staff will be in touch to help keep your community safe.

Public health will identify people who were exposed to measles at your ECE or school, check if they are immune to measles, and then provide advice on what they should do next.

Some people may need to stay at home in quarantine, others may not need to quarantine but will not be able to return to ECE or school for up to 8 days. The specific time period will be determined by public health. People may also be advised to contact their family doctor or Hauora provider, to get a blood test and the MMR vaccine.

As part of this you may be asked to:

- Share your immunisation register (if you're an ECE or primary school)
- Share attendance and contact details for parents of tamariki and students, and staff on site at the same dates/times as the person with measles
- Share information about your site and classrooms (so public health can determine the risk to the school or ECE community as a whole)
- Communicate with the ECE or school community using public health templates about what has happened, symptoms to look out for, and which people need to stay away
- Make sure people with confirmed measles and people with symptoms stay home
- Make sure people who were exposed to measles and are not immune do not attend your ECE or school

Public health will provide letter templates you can use to communicate with your school or ECE community, as well as fact sheets and other resources.

For more information

To learn more about measles visit: info.health.nz/conditions-treatments/infectious-diseases/measles

To learn more about the measles, mumps and rubella immunisation visit: info.health.nz/immunisations/vaccines-aotearoa/measles-mumps-and-rubella-mmr-vaccine

To download measles information and resources, including social media graphics, visit: www.tewhatauora.govt.nz/for-the-health-sector/health-sector-guidance/diseases-and-conditions/measles/



Mumps

Mumps is a contagious disease caused by a virus. It spreads very easily between people. It can cause swelling in the glands around the face. For some people, especially young men, it can be serious and cause symptoms that last a long time.

Symptoms

Some people with mumps can be very sick with symptoms. Others can have mumps and not have any symptoms.

Mumps symptoms can start 12 to 25 days after you are infected with the virus, but usually start within 16–18 days.

The typical symptoms of mumps are:



Swelling of the glands around the face



Pain in the jaw



Fever



Headache

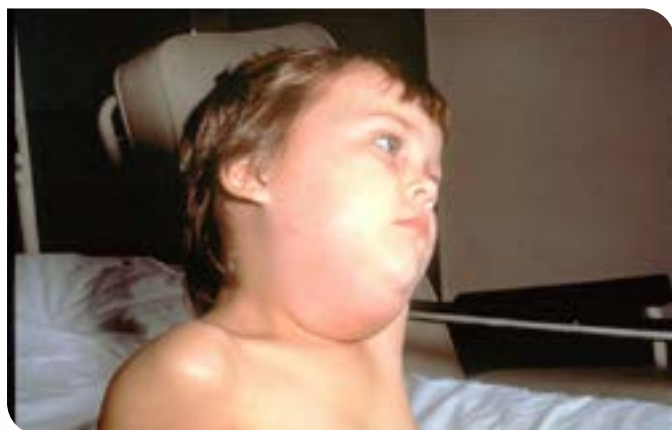
How mumps spreads

Mumps spreads through the air by breathing, coughing and sneezing. It can also spread through saliva, for example by kissing or sharing food and drinks.

You can easily give mumps to someone else who is not immune* to mumps from 2 days before swelling appears until 5 days after swelling starts. People who have the infection but do not have symptoms can also spread mumps.

To avoid spreading mumps to others, people with the virus are required to stay home in isolation for at least 5 days.

**People are considered immune to mumps if they had two documented doses of a mumps vaccine after the age of 12 months; were born before 1982; or have had mumps before.*



Protecting against mumps

The best protection against mumps is the free measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine. This is given to children at 12 and 15 months old, but lots of tamariki missed out on their vaccine during the past few years, and others may not have had it if they were born overseas or are now aged between 18 to 33 years.

The mumps (MMR) vaccine is free for all children age 18 and under in NZ, and all adults over the age of 18 who are eligible for free NZ healthcare.

Immunisation is extra important if you are planning to travel overseas. It protects you and helps prevent outbreaks in New Zealand.

To learn more about the vaccine visit:

info.health.nz/immunisations/vaccines-aotearoa/measles-mumps-and-rubella-mmr-vaccine/

If you suspect someone may have mumps

If someone has mumps-like symptoms you should:

- 1 Isolate them away from other students and staff so they do not risk passing on the virus
- 2 Arrange for them to be picked up and taken home by their parent or carer
- 3 Call your local public health service for further advice: www.tewhatauora.govt.nz/our-health-system/health-sector-organisations/public-health-contacts/

It is important the person's parent or carer calls their family doctor or Hauora provider, to get further advice. They can also call Healthline for free anytime on 0800 611 116.

If someone is confirmed as having mumps

If someone who was at your ECE or school is confirmed as having mumps public health will be in touch to help keep your community safe.

Public health will identify who was exposed to mumps at your ECE or school, check if they are immune to mumps, and then provide advice on what they should do next.

Some people will not be able to return to ECE or school for up to 13 days, the specific dates will be determined by public health. People may also be advised to contact their family doctor or Hauora provider to get the MMR vaccine.

To support this you may be asked to:

- Share your immunisation register (if you're an ECE or primary school)
- Share attendance and contact details for parents of tamariki and students, and staff on site at the same dates/times as the person with mumps
- Share information about your site and classrooms (so public health can determine the risk to the school or ECE community as a whole)
- Communicate with the ECE or school community using public health templates about what has happened, symptoms to look out for, and which people need to stay away
- Make sure people with confirmed mumps and people with symptoms stay home
- Make sure people who were exposed to mumps and are not immune do not attend your ECE or school
- Help facilitate immunisations, for example by providing information on how people can get these

Public health will provide letter templates you can use to communicate with your school or ECE community, as well as fact sheets and other resources.

For more information

To learn more about mumps visit:

info.health.nz/conditions-treatments/infectious-diseases/mumps

To learn more about the measles, mumps and rubella immunisation visit: info.health.nz/immunisations/vaccines-aotearoa/measles-mumps-and-rubella-mmr-vaccine/



Whooping cough

Whooping cough (pertussis) is a serious infection that causes a long coughing illness. It spreads easily between people. Whooping cough can be very serious for pēpi, tamariki and older adults.

Symptoms

The first signs of whooping cough are similar to a cold and usually occur in the first 5 to 10 days; these include:



A blocked or runny nose



Sneezing



A mild fever



Ongoing spasms of coughing

After about 1 week, symptoms can include:

- Uncontrollable coughing fits that last for up to a few minutes
- Coughing that may lead to vomiting, gasping or a whoop sound
- A thick mucus that can make you vomit or choke

Complications for pēpi and tamariki

Whooping cough can be very serious for pēpi and tamariki, especially those under 1 year old. Many pēpi catch whooping cough from their older siblings or parents – often before they are old enough to be immunised.

If your pēpi catches whooping cough, they:

- May not be able to feed properly
- May not be able to breathe properly
- May become so ill they need to go to hospital
- Could end up with serious complications such as pneumonia or brain damage



How whooping cough spreads

Whooping cough spreads easily between people by coughing and sneezing.

A person with whooping cough is likely to be infectious from the week before they start coughing when they have cold-like symptoms, to 3 weeks after the cough begins. This is when they can give whooping cough to other people.

When someone has whooping cough they will be given antibiotics. This doesn't cure the illness, but after 2–5 days of taking them they'll no longer risk passing on whooping cough to others.

How to protect against whooping cough

The whooping cough vaccine is the best way to protect against the illness. You need multiple whooping cough vaccinations to protect you throughout your life.

Whooping cough vaccines are free for pregnant people, all children under 18 years old and adults from 45 and 65 years old.

Pregnant people should get a vaccine from 16 weeks of every pregnancy to protect them. Then pēpi need 3 doses when they are 6 weeks, 3 months and 5 months old. Booster doses are also given at 4, 11, 45, and 65 years old.

Immunising against whooping cough during pregnancy protects about 90% of babies in their first few weeks of life.

If you suspect someone may have whooping cough

If someone has whooping cough symptoms you should:

- 1 Isolate them away from other students and staff so they do not risk infecting others
- 2 Arrange for them to be picked up and taken home by their parent and carer
- 3 Call your local public health service for further advice: www.tewhatauora.govt.nz/our-health-system/health-sector-organisations/public-health-contacts/

It is important the person's parent or carer calls their family doctor or Hauora provider, to get further advice. They can also call Healthline for free anytime on 0800 611 116.

If someone is confirmed as having whooping cough

If someone who was at your ECE or school is confirmed as having whooping cough public health will be in touch to help keep your community safe.

They may request that you:

- Share your immunisation register (if you're an ECE or primary school)
- Communicate with the school or ECE community about what has happened, symptoms to look out for, and which groups could be at higher risk
- Help identify people who may have been exposed to whooping cough – these people may require antibiotic medicines or the whooping cough vaccine, and they may be required to stay away from school or ECE until they no longer risk making others unwell
- Ensure people advised to stay away do not attend school or ECE
- Ensure people with confirmed whooping cough or whooping cough symptoms do not attend school or ECE
- Help facilitate immunisations, for example by providing messages to promote them

When to get urgent help

Call 111 and ask for an ambulance in an emergency if you or any tamariki:

- Are very ill
- Are having breathing difficulties
- Have long periods of coughing that end in vomiting
- Turn blue from coughing

Young pēpi under 2 months old may stop breathing as a first sign of whooping cough.

Whooping cough is very serious for pēpi and may require hospitalisation.

For more information

To learn more about whooping cough visit: info.health.nz/conditions-treatments/infectious-diseases/whooping-cough

To learn more about the whooping cough vaccine visit: info.health.nz/immunisations/vaccines-aotearoa/whooping-cough-pertussis-vaccine/



Meningococcal Disease

Meningococcal disease is a life-threatening bacterial infection. It can cause two very serious illnesses – meningitis and sepsis (blood poisoning). These complications can cause permanent disability, deafness or death. Early treatment is very important so if you suspect meningococcal disease don't delay – seek health advice fast.

Symptoms

Meningococcal symptoms can initially be very similar to the cold or flu. They can include:



High fever



Headache



Confusion



Sleepiness



Joint and muscle pains

There can also be more specific symptoms, such as:



Rash



A stiff neck



Dislike of/sensitivity to bright lights



Vomiting



Seizure or fit

Babies may have cool hands and feet, spots on their body and might refuse to feed. They may be hard to settle/crying, refuse to feed and have a bulging fontanelle (soft spot on head).

Children and adults may be sleepy, confused, behave strangely or become unconscious. A rash consisting of reddish-purple pin-prick spots or bruises, that don't disappear when you press on them with a glass, is a very worrying sign. You should call an ambulance immediately, if a rash like this appears in a sick child or adult. The rash can occur anywhere on the body, but do not wait for it to appear before seeking medical help.



If you suspect meningococcal get urgent advice

If you think someone might have meningococcal disease get urgent help by calling a doctor, medical centre, after hours clinic or Healthline (0800 611 116) right away – whether it is day or night. If someone is very sick call 111 urgently.

Meningococcal disease can develop rapidly, making people very sick. Getting treatment early is critical to preventing complications. If you suspect someone has meningococcal act fast.

Even if a person has been checked by a doctor, they should still be watched. If they get worse go straight back to a doctor or the hospital. Tell medical staff if the person has already taken antibiotics, as these may mask the symptoms.

How meningococcal disease develops

Many people carry meningococcal bacteria in their nose and throat without getting sick. In rare cases, the bacteria spread in the body and cause infections. These infections are known as meningococcal disease.

The bacteria can be spread through coughing and sneezing, sharing saliva (for example by kissing, sharing drink bottles, vapes or utensils or babies' dummies), and through touching hands.

Meningococcal disease is more common in:

- Pēpi and tamariki
- Teens and young adults, especially those living in shared accommodation such as boarding schools
- People who have other respiratory infections

- ↘ Close contacts of people with meningococcal disease
- ↘ People living in crowded housing
- ↘ People exposed to tobacco smoke
- ↘ People with a weak immune system (immunocompromised)

Protecting against meningococcal disease

Covering your nose or mouth when you sneeze or cough, and washing and drying your hands, can help reduce the chance of spreading bacteria. Avoid sharing items which may have saliva on them like drink bottles, vapes or lip balm.

There are a number of strains of meningococcus bacteria. The most common 1 in Aotearoa New Zealand is meningococcal B.

The meningococcal B vaccine is free for all:

- ↘ Pēpi
- ↘ Tamariki under 5 years old
- ↘ Rangatahi ages 13 to 25 years living in certain close-living situations such as boarding hostels

You can also be immunised against other strains, and this is especially important (and free) for young people aged 13 – 25 living in shared accommodation.

Vaccine catch-ups

Tamariki under 5 years old

If your tamariki received their 3 month, 5 month, or 12 month immunisations before 1 March 2023, they would not have received the MenB vaccine. But they can catch up.

All tamariki under 5 years old, who have not been fully immunised against MenB, can catch up for free until 31 August 2025.

Rangatahi entering into, or in their first year, of certain close living situations

Rangatahi aged 13 to 25 years who are entering into, or in their first year of certain close-living situations, can get a free MenACYW vaccine.

Close-living situations include boarding schools, hostels, halls of residence, military barracks, and prisons. It does not include flatting.

If you have previously had meningococcal vaccinations, get immunised again if your last meningococcal vaccinations were more than 5 years ago.

Both MenACYW and MenB vaccinations are needed for best protection.

Tamariki and adults at high risk

Additional meningococcal vaccines and doses may be available and free for children and adults at high risk of disease due to medical conditions, or people who've been in close contact with someone with meningococcal disease. These include the:

- ↘ MenB vaccine
- ↘ MenACYW vaccine
- ↘ Meningococcal C vaccine (given to young babies)

Talk to your doctor, nurse, or healthcare provider to see if this is recommended for you or your tamariki.

If someone is confirmed as having meningococcal disease

If someone at your school or ECE is confirmed as having meningococcal disease public health may contact you to provide advice and guidance, if there is a risk that staff or students may have been exposed.

You may be asked to:

- 1 Provide information to public health on who else the person has been in close contact with recently. This may include people who share a dormitory room, or those who may have had close contact with the individual over a prolonged period of time. These people will require treatment with antibiotics to prevent them getting meningococcal disease too, and will also be offered meningococcal vaccinations
- 2 Send out communications to others at your school or ECE, to make them aware of meningococcal symptoms to look out for and how to seek help
- 3 Facilitate immunisation of tamariki or students

People who have been near the person with meningococcal disease but not had close contact will not need treatment, but should be asked to look out for symptoms.

More information

For additional information on meningococcal disease visit: info.health.nz/conditions-treatments/infectious-diseases/meningococcal-disease/

For additional information on meningococcal vaccines visit: info.health.nz/immunisations/vaccines-aotearoa/meningococcal-vaccine/

Local public health contacts

Contact details for your local public health service are available from:

www.tewhātuora.govt.nz/our-health-system/health-sector-organisations/public-health-contacts/



Local Ministry of Education offices

Contact details for your local Ministry of Education office are available from:

www.education.govt.nz/our-work/our-role-and-our-people/contact-us/regional-ministry-contacts/

If your school needs support to manage an incident or crisis, call the Traumatic Incident team:

Freephone (NZ only): 0800 848 326