

Measles factsheet

Measles is a serious viral disease that can make people very sick. It is highly infectious amongst people that have not had the MMR vaccine or had measles before.



How measles spreads

Measles spreads very easily amongst people who are not immune (being immune means being protected against the virus). Measles is passed from person to person through the air by breathing, sneezing or coughing. You can catch it just by going into a room someone with measles was in two hours beforehand.

While an N-95 mask reduces the risk of measles spreading, normal blue surgical or cotton masks aren't effective.



Know the symptoms



Red, blotchy rash



Fever



Sore, watery pink eyes



Cough



Runny nose

The rash normally appears three to seven days after the other symptoms. This starts on the face and then spreads to the rest of the body.

If you feel unwell with measles symptoms you should stay home until you've spoken to a health professional.



Get vaccinated – protect yourself and others against measles

If you've had two doses of the MMR vaccine, after the age of 12 months old, you will be immune to the virus. This means you are protected against it and very unlikely to get it or pass it on to others.

The vaccine is free and available to anyone in New Zealand born after 1 Jan 1969. To get your vaccine contact your doctor.

If you're not sure if you've been vaccinated already then all good. Contact your doctor to check. It's completely safe to get the vaccine again if you need it.



If you have measles symptoms, such as a fever and a rash, you should seek medical advice urgently. Call your doctor or ring Healthline for free anytime on 0800 611 116.

Please do not visit a medical centre or hospital without calling first as you may risk passing on the virus to others. **In an emergency call 111.**

Check if you're protected

You are considered immune to measles if you:

- Were born before 1 Jan 1969
- Have had measles before
- Have had two doses of the measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine at 12 months of age or older
- Have had a blood test which shows you are immune

If you're immune you won't have to stay home in quarantine if you come into contact with someone who has measles.

To check if you and your whānau are immune check your Wellchild Tamiriki Ora or Plunket book, or contact your doctor.

COVID-19 vs measles

COVID-19 and measles can feel very similar to start with. This is why it's important to test yourself for COVID-19 if you have cold and flu symptoms and stay home if you're unwell, even if your test result is negative.

You should seek medical advice if your symptoms get worse, don't go away after 48 hours and a second COVID-19 test also comes back negative, or if you develop symptoms specific to measles, such as:

- a blotchy rash
- sore and watery pink eyes
- white spots inside your mouth

If in doubt seek help. Contact your doctor or call Healthline for free on 0800 611 116.

People at risk of serious illness

Some people are more at risk of getting really unwell if they catch measles. This includes:

- Anyone with a chronic illness or a weakened immune system
- Children younger than five years old who have not had one dose of the MMR vaccination
- Babies younger than 12 months who are too young to receive the first dose of the MMR vaccine
- Pregnant women

If you or your whānau are in these groups, it's even more important you get vaccinated if you can.

Pregnant women and children aged 12 months and younger cannot get vaccinated, however they will be less likely to catch measles if others in their whānau get vaccinated.

If you catch measles

If a test shows you have measles you'll need to stay home and isolate. You'll no longer be at risk of infecting others and can leave your home five days after you develop your rash, following a final check with a health professional.

Most people can isolate safely at home. It takes around seven to ten days to recover from when you first get symptoms. Around 1 in 10 people with measles need to go to hospital because of their symptoms.

A health professional will be in touch regularly if you need to isolate. They'll also identify anyone else at risk of catching measles from you, and provide them with further information.

If you're a close contact

If you've been in close contact with someone who has measles and you aren't considered immune you'll need to go in to quarantine.

The quarantine period will typically last around 14 days. A health professional will explain when you need to quarantine and how long for, and check in on you regularly.

Iso & quarantine support

In the Auckland region some manaaki support is available for people isolating or in quarantine because of measles.

If you need help while you're at home ask the public health professional when they call you, or contact MSD on 0800 559 009 to see if you're eligible for financial support.



For more information visit:
www.health.govt.nz/measles