

Pyes Pa Doctors

Measles Outbreak Information

(Spring 2019)

IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE MEASLES OR HAVE BEEN IN CONTACT WITH A CONFIRMED CASE OF MEASLES, PLEASE PHONE US FIRST BEFORE COMING IN. WHEN YOU ARRIVE FOR A CONSULTATION, PLEASE STAY IN YOUR CAR AND COMMUNICATE WITH US BY PHONE UNTIL A DOCTOR OR NURSE CALLS YOU IN. IF YOU ARE COUGHING WE WILL ASK YOU TO WEAR A MASK WHEN YOU COME INSIDE.

The Ministry of Health have advised us to give MMR vaccines to the following:

1. Children on the current immunisation schedule. This is given at 15 months and again at 4 years.
2. Children aged 6-12 months, if in contact with a known case of measles.
3. Children 6-12 months travelling overseas to countries *with an active measles outbreak* (see below for a list of these countries), or to areas of high risk within New Zealand.
4. Youths and adults under 50 years who have had no known doses of measles vaccination, or an unclear history of the same.

Those over 50 years are considered immune, as they most likely developed natural immunity during childhood when measles was widespread, before the vaccine was introduced.

Those under 50 have usually been immunised depending on which country they grew up in. The current measles vaccine has been used in New Zealand since 1969.

Some dates of Measles vaccines being introduced: China (1963), Korea (1965), Hong Kong (1967), UK & USA (1968), Australia (1969), Canada (1970), Singapore (1976), Fiji (1982), India & Ireland (1985).

One dose of the vaccine protects 95 people out of 100 - ie 95% coverage.

A second dose gives protection to another 3-4 people out of 100 - ie 98-99% coverage.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

Why is there a Measles outbreak?

- *Measles is one of the most highly infectious diseases known. It is estimated that each person with measles will infect 15 others who are not immunised.*
- *If someone gets measles, they are infectious 5 days before even realising it is measles. For the first 5 days it appears to be a bad case of flu. During this period, many people can be infected. (After day 5, a rash comes out.)*
- *Those they infect will start to get sick 10-14 days later, and during the time-lag period many cases can develop unseen and in turn, infect others.*
- *A country needs 95% coverage to stop measles from spreading prolifically. This is called "herd immunity". In some areas of New Zealand only 60% of people are immunised because of things such as access (time off work, transport, etc.), poverty, inequities, health literacy, and fear of vaccine side effects.*

Is the measles vaccine (MMR) free?

Measles vaccine (MMR) immunisations are funded for NZ residents and those eligible for funded medical treatments.

My baby is less than a year old. What can I do to protect her/him?

Keep your baby away from un-vaccinated people and those who are coughing or sniffly. Immunise promptly at 15 months, and call us to discuss options if baby is 6-15 months and at day-care, risking exposure. The immunisations do not work in babies less than 6 months old; your best protection is to keep baby at home. If your baby has been in contact with a known case of measles during their infectious period (5 days before and 5 days after the rash came out) please call us for advice.

Can my baby have their MMR vaccine at 6 months?

*The Ministry of Health is not recommending routine measles vaccines at 6-15 months unless your baby has been exposed to an active case of measles during the infectious period (5 days before the rash came out and 5 days afterwards) or will be traveling to a high-risk area in NZ or a country with an active outbreak. This is because the MMR vaccine is only about 75% effective at 6 months of age, and will require a total of three jabs if the first one is given before 15 months. **However, if your baby is more at risk (as outlined above), please call us to discuss.***

Countries currently known with Measles outbreaks:

- *Africa: DRC, Madagascar, Nigeria*
- *South America: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Columbia Peru, Uruguay, Venezuela*
- *USA: all states*
- *Israel, Syria*
- *Pacific: Japan, Hong Kong, Philippines*
- *European countries – Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Poland, Portugal, United Kingdom*
- *Neighbouring countries in the European region have also been affected: Albania, Belarus, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine*

I am an adult and I don't know if I had a measles vaccine as a child. What do I do?

- *50 years or older ie born before 1969: you are considered immune as there was lots of measles in the population until then.*
- *Younger than 50 years ie born after 1968: The measles vaccine was introduced into most first world countries in 1968-1969 – this includes NZ, Australia, UK, USA. So if you had any jabs as a child you likely would have received the measles vaccine. One dose of the vaccine protects 95 people out of a 100 ie 95%. A second dose adds another 3-4 people out of 100.*
- *If you are under 50 years and have any doubts, please talk to one of our nurses for advice.*
- *If you are a health care worker in contact with patients, a teacher working with children, or otherwise at risk, you may also ring one of our nurses for advice.*

I am an adult/child less than 50 years old and I know definitely I didn't have any measles vaccines

Please make an appointment for a free measles vaccine at the GP clinic where you are an enrolled patient. (Payment may be required if you do not qualify for Govt subsidy.)

How long does measles immunity (natural or from a vaccine) last?

Immunity is lifelong regardless if it is naturally acquired in those older than 50, or by immunization in those younger than 50

My child/I am sniffly and have a cough AND/OR have a rash, and want to be checked in case this is measles

Please call us before you arrive if you think you have any signs or symptoms of measles. When you arrive, please call us from your car and let us know you are here. A doctor or nurse will come to fetch you from your car, or see you in your car. We need to keep our waiting room and consulting rooms safe for small babies and others at risk.

I/my child have been told I have been in contact with an active case of measles during their infectious period (5 days before, through to 5 days after, the rash came out)

- *If you ARE immunized: you are safe. You cannot spread the illness to others, and do not need to enter into quarantine. You do not need a booster MMR vaccine.*
- *If you are NOT immunized: You need to enter into quarantine from 7 days after the first day you were in contact with the case, and stay in quarantine for 14 days after your last contact with the infected person - ie a full two weeks. We can email you a doctor's note for work/school, but please do not come into the practice during this period. After your quarantine period is over and you remain well, please book in for an MMR immunisation.*
- *IF YOUR CHILD HAS HAD A MEASLES CONTACT DURING THE INFECTIOUS PERIOD, AND IS LESS THAN 15 MONTHS OLD OR IS IMMUNO-COMPROMISED (has a weak immune system eg has cancer, on immunosuppressant treatment such as chemotherapy, oral steroids etc) PLEASE CALL US FOR ADVICE.*

I/my child have been told I have been in contact with an active case of measles, but this was NOT during their infectious period (5 days before the rash came out, and 5 days afterwards)

You will not be infected.

My doctor has said I may have measles. What do I do?

You need to stay in quarantine from others who do not have immunised status. There is no specific treatment for measles but things that can help are: bed rest in a quiet dark room, paracetamol or ibuprofen for pain/fever, drinking lots of fluids, wiping the eyes gently with wet cotton wool or a soft facecloth.

If you have concerns about the following symptoms please call us; do not break quarantine:

- *breathing difficulties*
- *stiff neck*
- *feeling drowsy or you cannot wake the patient up*
- *coughing up green or yellow thick mucous*
- *back pain*
- *sore ears*
- *having a fit (seizure)*
- *not passing urine for 10 hours.*

How dangerous is measles?

Measles has a death rate of 1-2 per 1000 people infected. 1 in 10 people infected will need hospital admission for complications such as pneumonia and encephalitis. Babies and small children with lowered immunity have a 50% death rate from measles. In the 1991 outbreak of measles in NZ, there were around 7000 cases of measles and 7 deaths.

I have heard that the measles vaccine (MMR) causes autism

There was a paper published in 1998 claiming the MMR vaccine caused autism. Subsequent studies showed that the data presented in this paper was fraudulent and the claim has been withdrawn. The author Dr. Wakefield was found guilty of ethical, medical, and scientific misconduct and his medical license was revoked. There is no evidence that this vaccine causes autism. It is in fact extremely well tolerated.

I am pregnant/trying to get pregnant. Can I have the measles vaccine (MMR)?

It is not safe to have this vaccine while pregnant, or if you are not using contraception and may be pregnant. This is because the vaccine is a weakened live virus and will pass to the foetus and may cause harm. We strongly recommend that you do not fall pregnant for one month after this vaccine is given.

I am on immunosuppressant medication. Can I have the vaccine?

No this virus is a weakened live virus and may harm you if you are on any of these medications.

I would like more information about vaccines

Immunisation Advisory Centre of New Zealand <https://www.immune.org.nz>