

BEAT THE BUGS THIS WINTER

The illnesses to prepare for and how to prevent them

TOPIC #2 Measles

Disease Snapshot

What to do if someone has measles symptoms

School and Early Learning Service Q&As

General Q&As

For your ELS or school community

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Measles Disease Snapshot

What is it?

A highly infectious virus that spreads faster than COVID-19 in people who aren't immune to it. Being immune means your body can fight off the virus so you won't get it.

Measles is a serious illness passed from person to person by breathing, sneezing or coughing. If you are not immune, and you've been in the same room as someone with measles, you are very likely to catch it.

Who is at risk?

The highest risk is for people who are not immune to measles – especially babies, children under five, pregnant women, and those with chronic illness or weakened immune systems.

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 the age of 12 months or older



Signs and symptoms

The most common first signs are cold and flu symptoms, followed by a blotchy rash that starts 3-7 days after the first symptoms. This begins on the face before spreading to the head and rest of the body, lasting for up to a week.

In the first few days of being unwell most people will have:

- A fever
- A cough
- A runny nose
- Sore and watery pink eyes

Some people also get small white spots inside their mouth.



How to prevent it

The best protection against measles is vaccination with two doses of the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine.

- In New Zealand, the MMR vaccine is scheduled to be given to children at 12 months and 15 months old.
- It can sometimes be given to children younger than 12 months (MMR0) if there is a measles outbreak in New Zealand – or if a family is travelling overseas to a country where there is a measles outbreak. The child will still need to receive two further doses, one at 12 months (MMR1) and one at 15 months old (MMR2).
- Those who only receive their first vaccine after the age of 15 months are given their second dose four weeks after the first.
- It can take two weeks for a person to be fully immune after being vaccinated.
- You can have an MMR vaccine at the same time as your COVID-19 vaccine.
- Two doses of MMR vaccine protect 99 out of 100 vaccinated people from measles. One dose of the vaccine will protect 95 per cent of people from measles.

The vaccine is free and available to anyone born after 1 January 1969, from their family doctor or health provider.

Reducing the risk of measles

Measles is much more contagious than other viruses, so it is very difficult to stop it spreading among non-immune people.

It can stay in the air for two hours and surgical masks (the commonly available blue ones) are not effective at stopping it, which is why it's so important to be vaccinated. Properly fitted and worn N-95 masks will provide some protection.

It's important you keep an up-to-date immunisation register for your children/ students if you are an ELS or primary school. This will speed up contact tracing if there's a case at your ELS or school.

You can also encourage staff and parents to check their vaccination status, or get vaccinated, to protect your ELS and school communities.

What to do if you get symptoms

People with measles symptoms need to go home and call their GP/family doctor. They will arrange a test if necessary and provide isolation advice (household members may also need to stay at home).

It's important to ring ahead before going to the doctor to prevent spreading illness to others in the waiting room.



**Ring
before
going to
the doctor**

What happens if you have measles?

People with measles can infect others in the five days before they develop the rash, and in the four days after.

They are therefore required to stay home in isolation for five days from the day the rash appears. They will be regularly contacted by a health professional who will provide advice and check on their wellbeing.

Anyone exposed to a person with the measles virus may also be at risk of getting the virus if they are not immune.

Who's most at risk from measles?

- Anyone with a chronic illness or a weakened immune system
- Children younger than five years who are unimmunised
- Babies younger than 12 months who are too young to receive the first dose of the MMR vaccine
- Pregnant women

Pregnant people and children younger than 12 months cannot get vaccinated.



Where to find more information

Healthline: 0800 611 116

a free, 24/7 service with interpreters available

Auckland Regional Public Health Service

www.arphs.health.nz/measles

Health Navigator

www.healthnavigator.org.nz/medicines/m/measles-mumps-and-rubella-mmr-vaccine

The Immunisation Advisory Centre

www.immune.org.nz/diseases/measles

The Ministry of Health

www.health.govt.nz/your-health/conditions-and-treatments/diseases-and-illnesses/measles

KidsHealth (A Starship Foundation and Paediatric Society of New Zealand website)

www.kidshealth.org.nz/measles

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Measles

What to do if someone has measles symptoms

If the symptoms are cough, fever, runny nose (i.e. similar to other illnesses, such as COVID-19):

Send the person home with a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) and ask them to do the test at home to rule out COVID-19.

IF POSITIVE

The person and their household will need to follow the standard guidelines and public health advice for COVID-19.

IF NEGATIVE, but they are still sick with the **same** symptoms

They should do another RAT 48 hours later. They can return to your school/ELS 24 hours after their symptoms end IF:

- They have no new symptoms
- They are feeling well, and
- Their RATs have been negative.

IF NEGATIVE, but they develop new symptoms (e.g. pink watery eyes, a rash, or white spots inside the mouth) **OR** they were already displaying these symptoms when at your ELS/school.

They should go/continue to stay at home.

They should immediately call Healthline (0800 611 116) or their family doctor/health provider for advice on what to do next.

If the person is tested for MEASLES and returns a positive result:

- They will need to isolate at home for five days from the day their rash appears and follow public health advice.
- Public Health will tell you if the person was infectious while at your ELS/preschool.
- If the person was infectious while at your ELS/school, you will be asked to provide information to help with contact tracing. This will include the names and contact details of staff or children/students who may have been exposed to the illness and at risk of also getting sick.
- You should alert your school/ELS community. This allows people to be more vigilant for symptoms, check if they're immune to measles, and get vaccinated if they're not. You should **not** share the name or details of the person with measles due to privacy.

More information

Healthline: 0800 611 116

KidsHealth

www.kidshealth.org.nz/measles

Auckland Regional Public Health Service

www.arphs.health.nz/measles

The Immunisation Advisory Centre

www.immune.org.nz/diseases/measles

Ministry of Health

www.health.govt.nz/your-health/conditions-and-treatments/diseases-and-illnesses/measles

How can you tell the difference between measles and COVID-19 symptoms?

The initial symptoms of measles are very similar to some COVID-19 symptoms (cough, fever, runny nose).

If someone at your ELS or school (staff member, child or student) has any of these symptoms, send them home with a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) and ask them to do the test at home to rule out COVID-19.

If the test is negative, but the person still has symptoms, they should test again in 48 hours and stay home until their symptoms have stopped. They can return to your school/ELS 24 hours **after their symptoms end IF:**

- They have no new symptoms
- They are feeling well, and
- Their RATs have been negative.

If the test is negative **but they develop new symptoms** (e.g. pink watery eyes, a rash, or white spots inside the mouth) **OR** they were already displaying these symptoms when at your ELS/school:

- They should go/continue to stay at home
- They should immediately call Healthline (0800 611 116) or their family doctor/health provider for advice on what to do next.

What should we do if someone at our ELS or school develops a rash?

If a child, student or staff member at your ELS or school develops a rash and has cold or flu symptoms, immediately arrange for them to go home. Isolate them away from others while they await collection.

They or their caregiver should immediately seek advice from a medical professional; they should call their GP or Healthline (0800 611 116 – a free, 24/7 service with interpreters available).

What happens if we have a case of measles at our ELS or school?

If someone with measles has been at your ELS or school, then contact tracers will be in touch to let you know. They'll support you to keep your community safe. As part of this you'll need to:

1. Share your immunisation register (if you are an ELS or primary school)
2. Share attendance details for children/students and staff who were on site at the same dates/times as the infectious person
3. Share contact details for staff and parents/caregivers
4. Make sure anyone who needs to stay home and isolate or quarantine doesn't come to your school or ELS until they have completed their quarantine or isolation period.
5. Make sure people with symptoms also stay home.

6. Let your staff/parents/caregivers know there has been a measles case at your ELS so they can be vigilant for symptoms, check their immune status and get vaccinated if they are not immune. To protect their privacy, you should not share the name/details of the person with measles.

Public health professionals will identify who was at risk of catching measles, check if they are immune to the virus, and provide people with advice on what to do next.

People may also be advised to contact their GP/family doctor, to get a blood test and the MMR vaccine.

Will everyone have to stay home if we have a measles case at our ELS or school?

Only people who are not immune will need to stay home. Your immunisation register (if you are an ELS or primary school) will be key to checking this quickly, so it is important to keep it up to date and encourage parents to share details for their children.

People who come into contact with the measles case or are in the same room within two hours need to stay home if they are not immune.

You are considered immune if you:

- Were born before 1 Jan 1969
- Have had measles before
- Have had two doses of the measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine, with the first dose received at the age of 12 months or older.

What should you do to prepare for measles at your ELS or school?

The most important thing to do is to get the MMR vaccine if you are eligible and encourage others to do the same.

Other steps you can take include:

- Updating your immunisation register if you are an ELS or primary school.
- Encouraging staff and parents/caregivers to check whether they, their child and their whānau are immune:
 - MMR vaccinations will be recorded in the person's Plunket or Well Child Tamariki Ora book, or they can check with their family doctor.
 - If they can't find a record of being vaccinated, it is best to get vaccinated. There are no risks to having the MMR again.
- Encouraging parents and staff to get the MMR vaccine or get their child vaccinated if they are not already immune.
- Making sure everyone's contact details are up to date, as you have done with COVID-19.
- Making sure people know to stay home if they are unwell.

If measles is spreading in Tāmaki Makaurau you can help people be alert by sharing the symptoms of the virus. Tell them to watch for cold and flu symptoms and then a rash a few days later.

If we've had a measles case at our ELS or school, do we have to do any special cleaning?

Measles spreads through the air by infectious droplets via coughing, sneezing and talking, or by touching a surface with infected saliva or mucus.

If someone with measles has been on your premises the area they were in should not be used for at least two hours after being vacated by the infectious person. It should be cleaned prior to being used again.

Personal Protective Equipment should be used during cleaning if there is a possibility of contact with body fluids and secretions (e.g. saliva, mucus).

Following the exposure event:

- Air out shared spaces and keep them well ventilated.
- Any surfaces that are frequently touched should be prioritised for cleaning, such as door handles, handrails, light switches, horizontal surfaces such as bench and counter tops and tables, toys, touch screens, taps, sinks and toilets.

Advice on cleaning and the appropriate products to use is available:

- **How to clean your early learning service or school during a pandemic**
www.education.govt.nz/school/health-safety-and-wellbeing/emergencies-and-traumatic-incidents/pandemic-planning-guide/how-to-clean-your-early-learning-service-or-school-during-a-pandemic/
- **Cleaning and disinfecting guidelines for Early Childhood Education Services**
www.midcentraldhb.govt.nz/HealthServices/PublicHealth/healthprotection/Documents/MidCentral%20Public%20Health%20Service%20ECE%20Cleaning%20Guidelines.pdf

Is there anyone who shouldn't get immunised against measles?

You shouldn't get the MMR vaccine if you are pregnant, have a weakened immune system or have previously had an anaphylactic reaction to MMR.

Pregnant women who think they have measles, or have come in contact with someone with measles, must call their general practice or lead maternity carer as soon as possible. If they were immunised against measles prior to becoming pregnant, they are almost certainly protected.

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Measles General Q&As

The measles virus

How does it spread?

Measles spreads very easily amongst people who are not immune. It is passed from person to person through the air by breathing, sneezing or coughing. And by touching surfaces contaminated with infected saliva or mucous.

If you are not immune, you can catch the virus just by going into a room where someone with measles had been in the two hours beforehand.

Do masks prevent it spreading?

Properly fitted N-95 masks provide some protection against measles, but vaccination offer the best protection.

Surgical masks (the blue ones commonly available) and cloth masks are not effective at stopping you from passing on or getting the virus.

How sick can you get with measles?

Most people recover from measles seven to ten days after getting symptoms. But sometimes measles can lead to serious complications.

Measles in pregnancy increases the risk of premature labour, miscarriage and stillbirth.

One in 10 people with measles needs hospital treatment and the most serious cases can result in deafness or swelling of the brain.

Common complications that affect about 1 in every 15 cases include:

- Ear infections
- Diarrhoea, which can also lead to dehydration
- Fits caused by fevers (febrile seizures)
- Pneumonia – this is the main cause of deaths from measles
- Other diseases of the airways (like bronchiolitis and croup)
- Eye ulcers

One in 1000 people with measles develop inflammation of the brain (encephalitis) - 15 in 100 of these people die and approximately 30 in 100 are left with permanent brain damage.

What is the treatment for measles?

Because measles is caused by a virus, there is no specific treatment.

Antibiotics are not helpful for measles and your doctor won't prescribe them unless the person with measles develops a bacterial infection as a complication of measles.

In severe cases of measles, particularly when there are more serious complications, hospital treatment may be necessary.

I'm about to travel to a country that has a measles outbreak. What should I do?

The Ministry of Health is advising people travelling overseas to make sure they are fully immunised against measles before they go. Measles is regularly brought into New Zealand through international travel. Children who have not yet been immunised are at greatest risk of the disease.

The Ministry of Health recommends that infants aged 6-11 months travelling to countries with serious measles outbreaks be given MMR vaccine before their travel. This is an additional vaccination for these infants – they will still need their usual MMR vaccinations at 12 months and 15 months old.

People who are not immune should be cautious about travelling to any countries where there are serious measles outbreaks. They can check whether there is a risk of measles in their destination country by visiting safetravel.govt.nz.

Vaccination and immunisation

Who can get the MMR vaccination?

The MMR vaccine is routinely given to children at 12 months old, with a second dose at 15 months old.

Anyone unsure if their child has been vaccinated should contact their GP or family doctor, or refer to their Plunket or Well Child Tamariki Ora book.

Anyone born after 1 Jan 1969 can get the vaccine for free.

The vaccine is free to people born *before* 1969 if there is evidence (e.g. a blood test result) showing they are non-immune. Most people born before 1969, when the vaccination was introduced, will have already been exposed to 'wild measles' and be immune.

I don't know whether I'm immune or not. What should I do?

Anyone unsure whether they or their child is immune and/or how many vaccine doses they have had should talk to their doctor as the information may be in their medical records. They can also check their own health records, such as their/their child's Plunket or Well Child Tamariki Ora book.

If the person or their child hasn't had measles before, and can't find a record of being vaccinated, it is recommended – and safe – to get the MMR vaccination.

Why are pregnant women at high risk from measles and can they be vaccinated?

Pregnant women who become ill with measles are at risk of miscarriage, premature labour and low birth weight infants.

You **cannot** be vaccinated for measles while you are pregnant, so it is strongly recommended that women who are planning a child get the MMR vaccine beforehand. The vaccine will protect both mum and the unborn baby from measles.

Women who are already pregnant, not immune and are worried about catching measles should encourage others in their whānau to get the vaccine. This will help reduce the risk of getting measles for the pregnant women and almost certainly eliminate the risk for their whānau (two doses of MMR vaccine protects 99 out of 100 vaccinated people from measles. One dose of the vaccine will protect 95 per cent of people from measles).

Where can you get vaccinated?

To get the vaccine contact your doctor. It will be free.



Staying home if you have measles or are a close contact

What does isolation mean?

People with measles are required to isolate to avoid spreading the virus to others. Isolation means staying at home and also, if possible, away from anyone in the household who is not immune.

A person who has measles is most infectious in the early stages of their disease - from 5 days before the rash appears until 4 days after the day the rash started. The day the rash started is Day 1.

People with measles should not have any visitors who are not immune to the virus or who don't know whether they are immune, and they should not go out - including to work, school or the supermarket. A health professional will call every day to check they are okay and ask about symptoms.

What does quarantine mean?

Anyone who has been near, or lives with, a person with measles will need to stay at home in quarantine **if they are not immune** to measles. People can be infectious with measles before even showing symptoms, so quarantine is important to prevent spread of the virus. Contacts in quarantine will receive advice from a health professional on what to do, how long to stay home for, and the symptoms to watch out for.

What do you do if you need to get food or medicine?

People in isolation or quarantine who need help getting essential items, such as food or medicines, can use on-line delivery services or contact a friend or family member for support. If they need to deliver anything to your home it's important they do not come in, unless they are immune to the virus.

What happens at the end of the isolation period? Do you need to have a negative test before you can leave?

No, people with measles do not need a test to finish isolation but a health professional will let them know when they are cleared to leave. People with measles need to isolate for five days from the day their rash began.



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Measles
For your ELS or School Community

Information to share with your ELS or school community

Below is sample copy that you can include in communications with your school, kura, ELS, kohanga or language nest community (for example, via newsletters, email, social media or your website).

You may also wish to use extracts from elsewhere in this resource to inform your communications.

Beat the bugs: check your family will be safe from measles this winter

Every few years measles is brought into New Zealand by travellers returning from countries where there is an outbreak of the virus.

While there are no measles cases in New Zealand right now, increasing international travel and reducing immunisation rates globally mean we may see measles arrive here this winter.

Measles is really serious and can be life-threatening for people who aren't immune to it.

'Immune' means your body can recognise the virus and knows how to fight it off, either because you've had the virus before or because you are vaccinated against it.

Measles is most dangerous for non-immune people – especially babies, children under five, pregnant women, and those with chronic illness or weakened immune systems.

The good news is that immunisation against measles is freely available and does an amazing job at protecting people from measles.

Two doses of the MMR vaccine protect 99% of vaccinated people while one dose protects 95% of people. And if you're vaccinated you won't need to go into quarantine if you find out you've been near someone with measles.

Keep your family safe from measles with these **five tips** from Auckland Regional Public Health Service:

1. Make sure you and your whānau are immune to measles.

You are considered immune if you:

- ✓ Were born before 1 Jan 1969, and/or
- ✓ Have had measles before, and/or
- ✓ Have had two doses of the measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine. In New Zealand, children are routinely vaccinated with the MMR vaccine at 12 months and 15 months old.

If you're not sure, check with your doctor to see if it's on your medical records. Or, check your Plunket or Wellchild Tamariki Ora book.

2. If you're not immune, or you're not sure, see your family doctor to get vaccinated as soon as possible.

You can get the MMR vaccine at the same time as a COVID-19 vaccine or influenza vaccine.

It's free for everyone who was born after 1969 and it's safe to get the vaccine again if you can't find a record of having it in the past.

The vaccine is free to people born *before* 1969 if there is evidence (e.g. a blood test result) showing they are non-immune. However most people born before 1969, when the vaccination was introduced, will have already been exposed to 'wild measles' and be immune.

3. If you're a non-immune woman thinking about having a baby, it's important to get vaccinated before you become pregnant.

It takes two weeks to become immune after being vaccinated and, once pregnant, you can't receive the vaccine.

If you're not immune and you're already pregnant, the people around you can help to provide a buffer of protection by making sure they are immune.

4. Know the symptoms of measles and stay home if you're sick.

The first symptoms of measles are like many other viruses - they include a runny nose, fever, cough and watery pink eyes. But with measles, a blotchy rash will follow 3-7 days later – starting on the face and head before spreading to the rest of the body.

Seek medical advice from your family doctor or call Healthline on 0800 611 116. They may arrange testing to help work out whether measles, COVID-19 or another virus may be causing the symptoms. Healthline is a free, 24/7 service with interpreters available.

5. Only return to your Early Learning Service, school or workplace 24 hours after your symptoms have stopped and if you're feeling well.

This stops the illness from spreading to others.

For more information
www.kidshealth.org.nz/measles