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<b>To:</b>	General Practices, Pharmacists, After-Hours Centres and Emergency Departments in the greater Wellington and Wairarapa regions
<b>From:</b>	Dr Annette Nesdale, Medical Officer of Health
<b>Date:</b>	9 December 2019
<b>Title:</b>	Measles update

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Please distribute the following information to relevant staff in your organisation.

All public health alerts are available at [www.rph.org.nz/publichealthalerts](http://www.rph.org.nz/publichealthalerts)

## Measles update

1. Measles in the greater Wellington region
2. Ordering of MMR vaccination
3. Eligibility for measles vaccines
4. Measles in the Pacific – proof of immunity required for travel to Tokelau or American Samoa

### 1. Measles in the greater Wellington region

There have been NO confirmed measles cases in the greater Wellington region since 6<sup>th</sup> November. However measles can easily be re-introduced from visits or travellers from Auckland, Samoa, Fiji, Philippines or other places where measles is occurring. ASK about travel and OFFER MMR vaccine as per the eligibility criteria below.

### 2. Ordering of MMR vaccine returns to usual process from 9 December 2019

The Ministry of Health has advised that practices can revert to the normal process to order MMR vaccine along with their other schedule vaccines. Providers should include MMR vaccine in their normal fortnightly vaccine orders.

**NOTE:** Distribution levels of MMR will continue to be monitored daily. The Ministry of Health has worked with DHBs to gather a good understanding of expected usage until the end of 2019. Any significant increase in usage above expected levels will be investigated to ensure that all regions and priority groups continue to receive appropriate levels of vaccine.

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## 3. Eligibility for measles vaccines

- All children and adolescents under the age of 18 years are eligible for FREE MMR vaccination in New Zealand regardless of immigration status
- Adults aged 18 years to under 50 years are only eligible to receive MMR vaccination if their immigration/residency status entitles them to receive publicly funded healthcare, e.g. born in NZ, have permanent residency, holds a work visa for a period of 2 years or longer.
- Adults who are not eligible to receive publicly funded healthcare are not eligible to receive MMR vaccination even if they meet the criteria for one of the vaccination priority groups.<sup>β</sup>
- Adults aged 50 years or older are not eligible to receive MMR vaccination even if they are travelling to a country with a measles outbreak.<sup>β</sup>

<sup>β</sup> MMR vaccine is not available for purchase by ineligible adults.

### Priority groups

The Ministry of Health would also like to take this opportunity to reiterate the current priority groups for vaccination are:

- Ensure all children receive their Schedule vaccines on time at **15 months** and **4 years**.
- Susceptible close contacts of a confirmed case **within 72 hours of first exposure** to measles when possible.
- Babies aged six months to 11 months who live in Auckland or who are travelling to Auckland or overseas to a country that has an active outbreak of measles
- Actively recall children aged under 5 years who need catch-up MMR vaccination.
- Opportunistically offer one catch-up dose of MMR for children aged 5 years to under 15 years who do not have one documented MMR vaccination
- un-immunised eligible people under the age of 50 travelling from New Zealand to Samoa, Tonga, Philippines and Fiji.

If you have any questions please email [nationalmeaslescoordination@health.govt.nz](mailto:nationalmeaslescoordination@health.govt.nz).

### Eligibility criteria and claiming

The eligibility criteria for publicly funded vaccinations states:

*Regardless of their citizenship or immigration status, children are eligible for publicly funded vaccinations on the Immunisation Schedule, and WellChild/Tamariki Ora services.*

You can also find this information on the Ministry of Health website- [vaccine eligibility](#).

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Claiming for vaccinating children who are not New Zealand citizens follows the same process as claiming for those who are citizens. This includes claiming for the vaccine and administration. Information is available in the [Immunisation Handbook](#) page 12.

Those over the age of 18 and who are not residents or citizens are ineligible – eligibility criteria can be found here [eligibility criteria](#).

## 4. Travelling to areas with measles outbreaks

*The table in appendix 1 provides guidance on countries with active measles outbreaks and guidance on measles vaccination.*

Due to the current outbreaks of measles in areas of the Pacific, American Samoa and Tokelau authorities have put preventative measures in place to prevent the spread of measles:

- **American Samoa** - travellers intending to visit are now required to demonstrate proof of immunisation at the border before entering the territory.
- **Tokelau** - as of 26 November 2019, travellers are required to demonstrate proof of immunisation before entering the territory.

All travellers are advised to check entry and exit requirements with the authorities of the countries they are travelling to. These requirements can change at short notice. This advice is in addition to any other travel specific vaccinations that may be required. New Zealanders travelling or living overseas should have a comprehensive travel insurance policy in place that includes provision for medical evacuation by air.

Further information and subsequent updates can be found at the **SAFE Travel website** <https://www.safetravel.govt.nz/news/measles>

### **Template letter for people aged 50 years and over travelling to American Samoa or Tokelau**

We have been advised that practices have had calls from people aged over 50 years who require documentation of their measles immunity for travel to American Samoa or Tokelau. The following template letter may be useful

*Practice letterhead*

*Date*

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*This letter is to certify that ..... DOB / / is travelling to .....*

*In line with the New Zealand Ministry of Health (MoH) advice, this person is not recommended to receive MMR vaccination and considered protected from measles.*

*MoH advice states that adults aged 50 years or older (born in New Zealand or overseas before 1969):*

- Are not recommended to receive MMR vaccination. They are considered to be immune to measles.*
- No measles vaccine was available in New Zealand until 1969 and measles is so infectious that people born before this were highly likely to be exposed.*
- For those born overseas, it is fairly similar as most countries introduced a measles vaccine in the late 1960s, 1970s or later.*

*Potential travellers should approach the consular services of their intended destination country to confirm that this would be acceptable.*

*Yours sincerely*

*Dr.....*

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## Appendix 1: Guidance on MMR prior to travel to an area with an active measles outbreak (IMAC website <https://www.immune.org.nz/hot-topic/measles-overseas-and-new-zealand>)

Age group	MMR vaccination recommendation
<u>50 years or older</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Not eligible to receive MMR vaccination, even if they are travelling to Auckland, Samoa, Tonga, Philippines, Fiji or another country with an active measles outbreak.<sup>**</sup><sup>β</sup></li></ul>
<u>18–49 years</u> <sup>α</sup>	Prior to travel to Samoa, Tonga, Philippines, Fiji or another country with an active measles outbreak <sup>**</sup> (not Auckland). <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>One MMR vaccination.<sup>β</sup></li></ul>
<u>15–17 years</u>	Prior to travel to Samoa, Tonga, Philippines, Fiji or another country with an active measles outbreak <sup>**</sup> (not Auckland). <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>One MMR vaccination.</li></ul>
<u>5–14 years</u>	Prior to travel to Auckland, Samoa, Tonga, Philippines, Fiji or another country with an active measles outbreak. <sup>**</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>One MMR vaccination.</li></ul>
<u>16 months to under 5 years</u>	Prior to travel to Auckland, Samoa, Tonga, Philippines, Fiji or another country with an active measles outbreak. <sup>**</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Age-appropriate catch-up vaccinations, including MMR vaccination.</li></ul>
<u>12–15 months</u>	Prior to travel to Auckland, Samoa, Tonga, Philippines, Fiji or another country with an active measles outbreak. <sup>**</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>One MMR vaccination plus the three other vaccinations (Hib, PCV10 and VV) due at 15 months (12 months in Auckland).</li><li>The second MMR vaccination remains due when the child is aged 4 years as per the Immunisation Schedule.</li></ul>
<u>6–11 months</u>	Prior to travel to Auckland, Samoa, Tonga, Philippines, Fiji or another country with an active measles outbreak. <sup>**</sup> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>One MMR vaccination.</li><li>The 15-months and 4-years MMR vaccinations remain due to be administered at the relevant ages as per the Immunisation Schedule.</li></ul>
<u>Under 6 months</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Not eligible to receive MMR vaccination even if they are travelling to Auckland, Samoa, Tonga, Philippines, Fiji or another country with an active measles outbreak.<sup>**</sup></li></ul>

### Footnotes

<sup>α</sup>Adults aged 18–49 years are only eligible to receive MMR vaccination if their immigration/residency status entitles them to receive publicly funded healthcare, e.g. born in NZ, have permanent residency, holds a work visa for a period of 2 years or longer.

<sup>β</sup>MMR vaccine is not available for purchase by ineligible adults.

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\*\* Travel to

- Fiji, Philippines, Samoa, Tonga
- Albania, Austria, Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, France, Finland, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Lebanon, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Syria, Taiwan, Thailand, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, the United Kingdom and the USA. (Source: [Fit for travel – Measles risk for international travellers](#)).