

6 September 2019

Public health advice for schools (to school principals and Boards of Trustees)

As you know, there is a large and increasing measles outbreak in Auckland with over 800 confirmed cases and over 1,000 cases nationally. There have been 21 cases in the Wellington region this year.

Measles is likely to continue in NZ for months with travel, school holidays, interschool events and tournaments all increasing the likelihood of further measles spread. Safeguarding your children from measles will help ensure they don't miss learning opportunities, NCEA school exams, and interschool sports and cultural activities.

We are asking schools to help us share information with their parent and staff community to raise awareness of what people can do now to prevent further spread of the disease.

We encourage staff and parents/caregivers to protect themselves and their children from measles by being fully vaccinated. Due to the increased demand for the MMR vaccine as a result of the current outbreak in Auckland, we advise anyone who is not protected to first check their medical centre's website or phone to see when they will be able to vaccinate you.

It is also important that your community are informed that anybody (staff or student) not known to be immune will be quarantined and excluded if measles occur in your school.

What schools can do NOW to protect students and staff

Messaging for staff and parents - attached as appendices

RPH has drafted the following messaging to send to parents, caregivers and staff (teaching, administration, support, parent helpers, sports coaches etc.):

- A letter to be sent to the whole school community (parents, caregivers and all staff).
- A message to post on other communication platforms i.e. Facebook, School Apps etc.
- Posters to place on school noticeboards etc.

Immunisation Register

Ensure your Immunisation Register¹ is up to date (these registers are a legal requirement for primary schools and early childcare education centres). Ensure that you also record the immunisation status of all your **workforce** born after 1/1/1969.

¹ All primary schools are required to maintain an immunisation register. Other schools may elect to do so. An up-to-date registers will make managing quarantine for susceptible children, young people and staff much easier.

What will happen if there is measles at your school

If a pupil or staff member at your school is diagnosed with measles, you will be contacted by Regional Public Health (RPH) and we will require you to take the following actions:

- Ensure the person with measles is not at school while they are infectious - we will advise on safe return date.
- Quarantine/exclude children/ pupils / staff **who do not have evidence** (WellChild book, print out from the GP) **of measles protection** (see appendix 1 for details) for **up to 14 days after their last contact with the infectious person**. RPH will provide the dates for the quarantine period. Note the quarantine period will be extended if there are further cases at the school.

If someone else informs you of measles in your school we recommend you ensure that the person is isolated at home and then **check with us** before taking any further action. You do not need to undertake any action unless the case is confirmed by RPH. We are frequently “chasing rumours” of measles (or other notifiable diseases) and would prefer to ensure the illness is confirmed (or at least probable) before disrupting your operations and alerting your community.

Further resources

- Important health information and resources including fact sheets (in multiple languages) and posters can be found at: www.rph.org.nz/measles/
- For information on measles see: Ministry of Health – www.health.govt.nz/measles or Health Navigator – <https://www.healthnavigator.org.nz/health-a-z/m/measles/>

Measles will be very disruptive to the school community and we therefore recommend that you share this information with your staff and parents so that they can be prepared – either by having their documents ready or immunising now if they are not protected.

You can contact RPH for further advice if required on 04 570 9002.

Thank you for your help in reducing the impact of measles in your community.

Yours sincerely

Dr Annette Nesdale

Medical Officer of Health
Greater Wellington Region

Appendix 1. UPDATED advice on measles protection and immunisation

Check here to see if children are protected:

AGE	PROTECTED?
0-6 months of age	May have some protection from their mother from pregnancy and during breast-feeding.
6 months to 12 months	Not protected - but can be vaccinated early if: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If travelling to a high risk country overseas. • Specific risks identified after discussion with their GP NOTE: The child will still need another 2 doses of MMR after 12 months of age.
12 to 15 months	Not protected. NEW ADVICE- If traveling to Auckland it is recommended to have the 15 month immunisations (includes the 1st measles vaccine) early from 12 months of age.
15 months until 4 th birthday	One documented dose of MMR = fully immunised for age.
4 years to 19 years	Two documented doses of MMR = fully immunised for age.

Check here to see if an adult is protected:

YEAR BORN	PROTECTED?	RECOMMENDED ACTION
Born before 1 January 1969 in NZ	Yes, assumed protected as measles was common in NZ at this time.	No action required.
Born between 1969 and 1980 (inclusive) in NZ	Probably not – received only 1 measles vaccine which may have been given at 10 months of age when less effective.	Get a second MMR vaccine.
Born between 1981 to 1990 (inclusive)	Protected if you had two measles vaccines.	Check if you have had two measles vaccines. If in doubt, get a second MMR vaccine.
Born between 1991-1996 in NZ	People born 1991 to 1996 may not have had a second measles vaccine. This was when the second measles vaccine (MMR) was changed from 11 years to 4 years. Children aged five to 10 years at this time were offered catch up MMR vaccine through schools, but uptake and coverage was not high.	Check if you have had two measles vaccines. If in doubt, get a second MMR vaccine.
Born in NZ from 1 January 1997	Protected if you have had two measles vaccines – usually given at 12-15 months and then at four years.	Check if you have had two measles vaccines. If in doubt, get a second MMR vaccine.

Appendix 2 - Messaging for schools to send out eg FB, Alert app, School website:

Important information about Measles – public health advice for all parents

We have received important information from Regional Public Health regarding the measles outbreak and steps we need to take to protect our school community. Please read the information found on the below links.

Link to letter to parents. www.rph.org.nz/measles

Link to RPH website with fact sheets, posters etc <http://www.rph.org.nz/measles/>

Link to Ministry of Health – www.health.govt.nz/measles

Appendix 3 Template letter for staff and parents

Measles – important information from Regional Public Health (RPH)

As you know, there is a large and increasing measles outbreak in Auckland with over 800 confirmed cases and over 900 cases nationally. There have been 21 cases in the Wellington region this year.

Measles is likely to continue in NZ for months with travel, school holidays, interschool events and tournaments increasing the likelihood of further measles spread.

Safeguarding your children from measles by being fully vaccinated, keeping students and staff off school and excluding those who have been exposed but are not immune will all help protect others, especially those at risk of complications from disease. It will also help to ensure they don't miss learning opportunities, NECA school exams, arts and sports tournaments and school balls.

To protect your child and their school RPH recommends the following actions NOW

- Check the table below to see if you and your whanau are protected from measles
- If you are travelling to Auckland, especially South Auckland make sure you are vaccinated. This advice NOW includes babies aged 12-15 months who are recommended to have their first measles vaccine early before going to Auckland.
- If you are not vaccinated we advise you to check your medical centre's website or phone to see when they will be able to vaccinate you. The current measles outbreak in Auckland has led to an increased demand for the MMR vaccine.
- Talk to your doctor if you are travelling overseas; especially if you have babies aged 6-12 months.
- Provide a copy of your child's immunisation records to your school when asked. This information can be found:
 - a. Wellchild book
 - b. Asking your medical centre for a printout of your/ your child's immunisations
 - c. For children aged 0 to 14 years the parent can email RES-NIR@huttvalleydhb.org.nz and ask for a copy of your child's National Immunisation Register record. We will need the child's NHI number (if known), full name, date of birth, including mum's first and last name. This will ensure we get the correct record if there are children with similar names born on the same day.
- If your children are NOT protected from measles start thinking about alternative arrangements if there is confirmed measles at your school. Children who are not protected CANNOT attend school, sports or social events for up to 14 days after their last contact with the infectious person. This date will be extended if there are further cases in the school.

Measles will be very disruptive to the school community and we want parents/caregivers and students to be prepared and protected – either by having your immunisation records ready or immunising now if you are not protected.

You can contact Regional Public Health for further advice if required on 04 570 9002.

Thank you for your help in reducing the impact of measles in your community.

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Appendix 4: Posters

Measles

It isn't just a little rash

Measles can be dangerous, especially for **babies, children and pregnant women.**

Measles symptoms typically include:

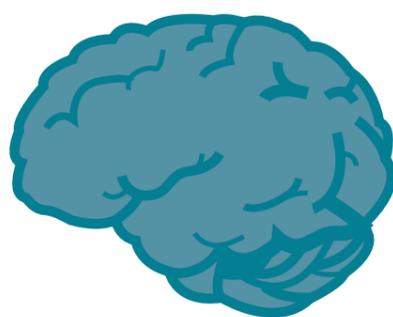
- High fever (may spike to more than 40°C)
- Cough
- Runny nose
- Red, watery eyes
- Rash may develop 3-5 days after symptoms begin



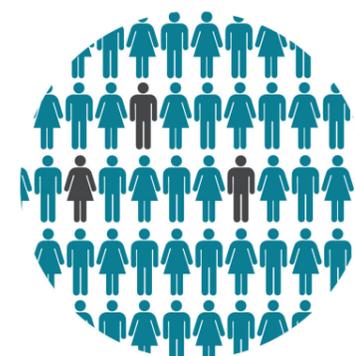
Measles can be life threatening:



1 out of 3 people who get measles may be hospitalised.



1 out of every 1,000 people with measles may develop brain swelling which may lead to brain damage.



1 out of 1,000 people with measles may die from complications.

**You can protect your children with vaccination.
Talk to your GP or practice nurse.**

Measles

Top 3 things parents need to know about measles

An unprotected (or unvaccinated) child can get measles when travelling overseas and also at home in New Zealand.

This is a list of some of the most important facts you need to know about measles.

Measles can be serious.



Some people think of measles as just a little rash and fever that clears up in a few days, but measles can cause serious health complications, especially in children younger than 5 years of age. There is no way to tell in advance the severity of the symptoms your child will experience.

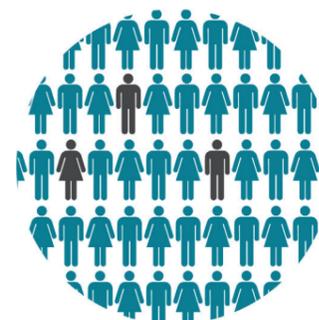
- 1 out of 3 people who get measles may be hospitalised.
- 1 out of every 1,000 people with measles may develop brain swelling which may lead to brain damage.
- 1 out of 1,000 people with measles may die from complications.

Some of the more common measles symptoms include:

- High fever (may spike to more than 40°C)
- Cough
- Runny nose (corzya)
- Red, watery eyes (conjunctivitis)
- Rash (3 – 5 days after symptoms begin)

Measles is very contagious.

Measles spreads through the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It is so contagious that if one person has it, up to 9 out of 10 people around them will also become infected if they are not protected. Your child can get measles just by being in a room where a person with measles has been, even up to one hour after that person has left. An infected person can spread measles to others even before knowing they have the disease.



You can protect your child against measles with a safe and effective vaccine.

The best protection against measles is the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine. *Two doses of MMR vaccine provide the best protection:*

- The first dose at 15 months of age
- The second dose at 4 years of age

Travelling to Auckland

NEW ADVICE: it is recommended that babies 12–15 months **travelling to Auckland** have their MMR early.

Travelling overseas

People with babies 6–12 months travelling overseas to countries with large measles outbreak should talk to their doctor about early vaccination.

Don't
ASSUME
You're
IMMUNE

to measles.

**IT'S
FREE!**

To get immunised now, talk to Student Health or your family doctor or nurse.

Not only children get measles.
Protect yourself and your family.

Call **0800 IMMUNE** or visit
health.govt.nz/measles for more info