

Measles Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is measles anyway?

Measles is a serious viral illness that:

- is highly infectious
- affects the respiratory system
- spreads easily through coughing or sneezing
- results in one in 3 people in NZ being hospitalised

What are the symptoms of measles?

- begins with a fever
- progresses to a cough, runny nose, and sore red eyes (usually within 2-4 days)
- skin rash appears 2-4 days after the first symptoms; begins at the hairline, gradually spreads down the body to the arms and legs
- rash lasts up to one week. NOTE: *People are most infectious in the five days before the rash appears*
- usually takes 10-12 days from contact with the person with measles to the first symptom

Are you protected from measles?

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 one 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 – previously given at 12-15 months of age and the other at 4 years. From October 2020 the first dose of MMR is at 12 months and the second at 15 months	Check if you have had two measles vaccines. If in doubt, get a second MMR vaccine

Are your children protected?

Age	Protected
0-6 months of age	Too young to be vaccinated, may have some protection from their mother from pregnancy and breast feeding
6-11 months of age	<p>If there is a measles outbreak, or if you're travelling to a country with an active measles outbreak, pēpi between the ages of 6 and 11 months may be advised to have an additional free dose of the MMR vaccine early. Talk to your doctor, nurse, or healthcare provider about this.</p> <p>Your child will need a further 2 doses of MMR after the age of 12 months if their first dose of MMR was given before the age of 11 months. If MMR is given at 11 months this can be considered as MMR1 and therefore only need one further dose at least 4 weeks later.</p>
12-15 months of age	<p>The MMR vaccine is free and offered to tamariki at 12 months and 15 months.</p> <p>If your child missed their MMR vaccine it's free for them to catch up.</p>

What is the advice for pregnant women?

Pregnant women who become ill with measles risk miscarriage, premature labour and low birth weight infants. If a woman was immunised against measles prior to becoming pregnant, they are almost certainly protected.

NOTE:

- If a pregnant woman thinks they have contracted measles, or have come in contact with someone with measles, they must call their general practice, or lead maternity carer, as soon as possible.
- If not immunised against measles prior to becoming pregnant, women should **not** receive the MMR vaccine during pregnancy.
- Women of child bearing age should avoid pregnancy for one month after having a dose of the MMR vaccine.
- Breastfeeding mothers can receive the MMR vaccine safely.

Women can reduce their chances of catching measles if the people they are in close contact with, e.g., close friends, family and work colleagues, are immune. Encourage close friends, family and work colleagues to check whether they have been vaccinated. If not protected, contact their general practice to make a vaccination appointment when supplies are available.

Where can I get more information?

- [Ministry of Health | Measles](#)
- [Healthify | Measles](#)
- [Immunisation Advisory Centre](#) 0800 IMMUNE
- [Regional Public Health | Measles](#)