

Information about measles

Measles is a serious viral disease that can make people very sick. It can spread very easily among people who have not had the Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR) vaccine or had measles before.



How measles spreads

Measles spreads easily between people who are not protected against the virus (immune). It is spread by breathing, sneezing or coughing. You can catch it just by going into a room someone with measles was in an hour before.



Get vaccinated – protect yourself and others against measles

The MMR vaccine protects you against Measles, Mumps and Rubella and limits the chance you will have to isolate or quarantine if you come into contact with someone who has one of these viruses. Infants given MMR from age 11 months are considered to have been given MMR1 and therefore only need one further dose at least 4 weeks later, or at age 15 months.

If you've had two doses of the MMR vaccine, after the age of 11 months old, you will be immune to the virus. This means you are protected against it and very unlikely to get it or pass it on to others.

The vaccine is free if you're eligible for free healthcare in New Zealand.

Anyone who has not been vaccinated against measles, or who is unsure if they had measles previously (including people born before 1969), are recommended to be immunised with the MMR vaccine. Previously those born before 1969 were precluded.



Know the symptoms



Red, blotchy rash



Fever



Sore, watery pink eyes



Cough



Runny nose

The rash normally appears three to seven days after the other symptoms. This starts on the face and then spreads to the rest of the body.



What to do if you have measles symptoms

If you have measles symptoms, such as a fever and a rash, you should seek medical advice urgently. Call your doctor or ring Healthline for free anytime on 0800 611 116.

Please do not visit a medical centre or hospital without calling first as you may risk passing on the virus to others. In an emergency call 111.

A dedicated Disability Helpline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to support disabled people. For measles or general enquiries call free on 0800 11 12 13 or text 8988 for help and information. You can also access this helpline using the NZ Relay Service: www.nzrelay.co.nz

A person with experience or knowledge of disability will answer your call from 8am to 8pm. After 8pm, calls are answered by a trained member of the Healthline team.

Check if you're protected against measles

You are considered immune to measles if you:

- Were born before 1 Jan 1969 (if had measles infection or vaccine)
- Have had measles before
- Have had two MMR vaccinations, and the last dose was over a month ago. Babies under 15 months are considered immune if they have had one MMR dose after 11 months of age, given at least a month ago
- Have had a blood test showing you are immune

If you're immune, you won't have to stay home in quarantine if you come into contact with someone who has measles.

Anyone who has not been vaccinated against measles, or who is unsure if they had measles previously (including people born before 1969), are recommended to be immunised with the MMR vaccine.

To check if you and your whānau are immune, check your Wellchild Tamiriki Ora or Plunket book, or contact your doctor.

COVID-19 vs measles symptoms

COVID-19 and measles can feel very similar to start with. This is why it's important to test yourself for COVID-19 if you have cold and flu symptoms, and to stay home if you're unwell, even if your test result is negative.

You should seek medical advice if:

- your symptoms get worse
- they don't go away after 48 hours
- a second COVID-19 test also comes back negative
- You develop symptoms specific to measles, such as:
 - ◊ a blotchy rash
 - ◊ sore and watery pink eyes

If in doubt seek help. Contact your doctor or call Healthline for free on 0800 611 116.

People at risk of serious illness

Some people are more at risk of getting very unwell if they catch measles. This includes:

- Anyone with a chronic illness or a weakened immune system
- Children younger than five years old who have not had one dose of the MMR vaccination
- Babies younger than 11 months who are too young to receive the first dose of the MMR vaccine
- Pregnant people

If you or your whānau are in these groups, it's even more important you get vaccinated if you can.

Pregnant people and children aged 11 months and younger cannot get vaccinated (although if there's an outbreak of measles children under 11 months may be able to be vaccinated), however they will be less likely to catch measles if others in their whānau are vaccinated.

If you catch measles

If a test shows you have measles you'll need to stay home and isolate. You can leave your home four days after you develop a rash, following a final check with a health professional.

Most people can isolate safely at home. It takes around seven to ten days to recover from when you first get symptoms. Around 1 in 10 people with measles need to go to hospital because of their symptoms.

A health professional will be in touch regularly if you need to isolate. They'll also identify anyone else at risk of catching measles from you, and provide them with further information.

If you're a contact

If you've been in contact with someone who has measles and you aren't considered immune you may need to quarantine.

The quarantine period will typically last around 14 days. A health professional will explain when you need to quarantine and how long for, and check in on you regularly.

If you have had one dose of MMR vaccine, you do not have to quarantine, but should take precautions. You do not need to remain at home, but for 14 days you should stay away from early learning services. Please also stay away from healthcare facilities except to get vaccinated or if you require urgent medical attention. Wear a mask and call first to say you are a measles contact.

Isolation & quarantine support

If you need help while you're at home ask the public health professional when they call you, or contact MSD on 0800 559 009 to see if you're eligible for financial support.



For more information visit:
www.health.govt.nz/measles