

Measles – what you can do now

Get ready NOW – be prepared before Measles is in our communities

It's been a tough year with COVID-19, influenza and other winter viruses, and it's not over. With our borders opening to international travellers, we are expecting measles to also come to NZ. Now is a great time to get prepared.

Why are we so worried about measles?

Measles is a very serious illness and is more infectious than COVID-19. Over the last two years there are more people, especially tamariki, at risk of measles as they have delayed or not had their two measles vaccines that are usually given at 12 months and 15 months.

The good news is that two doses of the measles vaccine (MMR) protects almost everyone who gets vaccinated.

What is measles?

Measles is a highly infectious viral illness spread through the air by sneezing and coughing. **Measles can be serious with one** in three people developing ear infections, pneumonia, or diarrhoea. Severe cases may require hospitalisation.

It usually takes about 10 days from contact with the measles virus to become unwell.

The first signs are a high fever and runny nose, cough, and red eyes. About four to five days later the rash starts on the neck and face and then spreads over the body in the next days.



Infectious period

If you catch measles, you are infectious (can spread the virus) from 5 days before the rash appears and for 4 days after the rash appears (about 10 days in total).

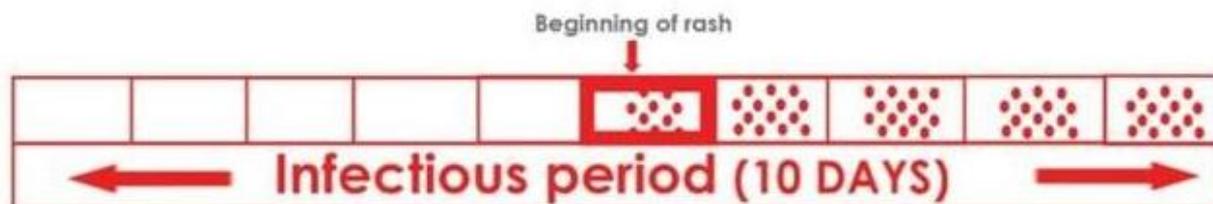


Image credit: ARPHS

¹ People born before 1 January 1969 are considered immune to measles as they grew up when measles occurred frequently in the community.

Protect your tamariki and whānau

The best prevention against measles is to ensure everyone in your family (born after 1969¹) has had two MMR vaccinations. If you are unsure, you can check your vaccination status with your family doctor or general practice, although there is no harm in getting an additional dose. Vaccines are **FREE** for tamariki and adults who have not had two doses of the vaccine.

What is considered “fully vaccinated” for tamariki?

| Age | Immunity |
|------------------------|---|
| 0 to <12 months of age | Not immune – not yet vaccinated |
| 12 months to 15 months | One documented dose of MMR = fully immunised for age |
| Over 15 months | Two documented doses of MMR = fully immunised for age |

What about adults?

Adults are considered protected if they have had doctor diagnosed measles or two doses of a measles vaccine after 12 months of age. Measles immunisation has occurred at different ages since it was introduced in 1969. The following table will assist to determine if adults are protected.

| YEAR BORN | ARE YOU PROTECTED? | RECOMMENDED ACTION |
|----------------------------------|--|--|
| Born in NZ before 1 January 1969 | Yes, you are assumed to be protected as measles was common in NZ at this time. | No action required |
| Born in NZ between 1969 and 1980 | Probably not – only one measles vaccine which may have been given at 10-12 months of age when it was less effective. | Get a second MMR vaccine. Measles immunisation is free |
| Born in NZ between 1981 to 1990 | You are protected if you had two measles vaccines. | Check if you have had two measles vaccines. If in doubt get a second MMR vaccine. Measles immunisation is free |
| Born in NZ between 1991-1996 | People born 1991-1996 may not have had a second measles vaccine as MMR changed from 11 years to 4 years. Schools offered children aged 5 to 10 years at this time a catch up MMR vaccine but uptake and coverage was not high. | Check if you have had two measles vaccines. If in doubt get a second MMR vaccine. Measles immunisation is free |
| Born in NZ from 1997 | You are protected if you have had two measles vaccines – usually 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. Measles immunisation is free |

Further information:

- www.healthnavigator.org.nz/health-a-z/m/measles/
- www.ProtectAgainstMeasles.org.nz
- www.health.govt.nz/your-health/conditions-and-treatments/diseases-and-illnesses/measles/measles-frequently-asked-questions
- Call Healthline on 0800 611 116 if you have symptoms and need advice

TeWhatuOra.govt.nz

PO Box 31907, Lower Hutt, 5018

Waea pūkoro: +64 570 9002

Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government