

Important information about the Measles Vaccine

The measles outbreak has led to high demand for the Measles Mumps Rubella (MMR) vaccine. While it is good news that so many people have been vaccinated in recent weeks, we now need to carefully manage current MMR vaccine supply.

As a temporary measure, your general practice has been asked to prioritise vaccinating those most at risk.

At the moment, your general practice has been asked to keep most of their vaccine for **children aged under 5 years**.

They may also be able to vaccinate **some people under 30 years with no MMR vaccinations, particularly Pacific and Māori**.

- Babies and young children (aged under 5 years) are most seriously affected by measles and our first priority is to protect them.
- Young Pacific and Māori people are also a priority in the current outbreak because more are getting seriously ill and needing hospital care.
- People aged 30-50 are currently **not** a priority for vaccination. Once we have more vaccine in stock we will be able to provide MMR for those aged 30-50.
- If you are 50 years of age or older, you are very likely to have natural immunity to measles because the illness was circulating widely in New Zealand and around the world when you were young.

Please support this action and help us protect those most at risk.

We know that having to wait for an MMR vaccination may cause concern. We want to reassure people that the Ministry of Health has advised us an additional 100,000 doses of vaccine have been secured for New Zealand. We expect this extra vaccine to arrive in the next few months.

Thank you for your understanding.

Who is most at risk from measles?

- Children under five years old are the most likely to get seriously ill from measles.
- In this Auckland outbreak we are also seeing high numbers of young Pacific and Māori people needing hospital care.

How can I protect myself and my whānau?

- Make sure your children are vaccinated on time at 12 months and four years – vaccination is FREE from your general practice.
- If you have a child younger than 12 months, talk to your GP about your options.
- If you are under 30 years of age and have not had any MMR, talk to your GP. They may be able to give you a FREE vaccination.
- Pregnant women cannot be given MMR. If you are pregnant ask your GP or your Lead Maternity Carer (LMC – your midwife or obstetrician) for advice.

What are the symptoms of measles?

- The first signs of measles are a runny nose, cough, sore eyes and high fever.
- These symptoms are followed by a rash.
- Measles can be very contagious before you get symptoms.

What should I do if I think I have measles?

Please stay at home and call your doctor or Healthline (0800 611 116) for advice.

How can I check my vaccination status?

- Check your Plunket book or talk to your general practice.
- If you are 50 years of age or older, you are very likely to have natural immunity to measles because the illness was circulating widely around the world when you were young.

Where can I get an MMR vaccine?

- At the moment your general practice has been asked to prioritise MMR for those most at risk. Once we have enough vaccine we will be able to provide MMR for others.
- Children can get a FREE vaccine from their practice at 12 months and four years old.
- If you are under 30 years of age and have not had any MMR, talk to your GP. They may be able to give you a FREE vaccination.
- If you are aged 30 years and older, you are not a priority for an MMR vaccine right now.

What should I do if I'm diagnosed with measles?

- If you have measles, please stay away from work, school, and public places until you've been notified by your doctor that it's safe to go out – this will help stop measles spreading.
- If you have children who have measles, please keep them at home from daycare, school, sporting events so other children don't get it. Please tell the school, daycare or club that your child has measles.

Why is the amount of vaccine in Auckland low at the moment?

- The measles outbreak has led to high demand for MMR vaccine.
- Because of this we now need to carefully manage current vaccine supply to ensure there is enough for those most at risk: babies and children under five years old.

When will more MMR vaccine arrive?

- PHARMAC, the agency responsible for vaccine supply, has secured more MMR vaccine from overseas. We understand this will arrive in the next few months.