

# Measles outbreak information for Medical, Radiation Oncology and Haematology Patients

Measles is a highly contagious virus that can be life threatening. People exposed to the virus are at risk of a serious measles illness if they:

- Are receiving chemotherapy or stem cell transplantation,
- Are within 6 months of completing chemotherapy or immunotherapy,
- Have received allogeneic stem cell transplantation in the last 2-3 years,
- Or remain immunosuppressed.

People with measles are infectious for ten days: 5 days before the onset of rash, the day the rash appears, and the next 4 days.

Measles 'contacts' are people such as household members who have shared the same air space with a person infectious with measles and who may be developing the disease without knowing it. It usually takes 7-14 days for a contact who has become infected with the measles virus to start to have symptoms.

## Advice for haematology and oncology patients during the Auckland outbreak

- If you are aged between 5-50yrs check you have had x2 MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) vaccinations. Check your Plunket records if available, or with your GP.
- Even if you have received the MMR vaccine, if your current immune system is suppressed, you might not be immune. You can have a serology test to check this.
- You are **NOT** able to be vaccinated against measles while on chemotherapy, or for six months following completion of chemotherapy. This includes immunotherapy and stem cell transplantation. If you are unsure of whether this applies to you, please check with your oncologist.
- For those on chemotherapy, immunotherapy, or post-stem cell transplant your best protection is to ensure the members of your household are immune. Ensure household members have had their scheduled MMR vaccinations at 12 months and 4 years. Household members aged 5-29 years who have had no MMR should talk to their doctor to see when they can be vaccinated. MMR vaccine stock is limited at the moment so many people aged over five years will have to wait to be vaccinated. If your household contacts are not vaccinated and have been exposed to measles, they should stay AWAY from you in quarantine elsewhere (see below)
- Individuals **who are exposed to measles** and are uncertain if they are immune should stay at home from 7 days after the first exposure, to 14 days after the last exposure. Isolation means staying away from anyone who is immunosuppressed and from other people, and not attending school, work or social events. There is a quarantine calculator on the ARPHS website that can be used to check when people should stay at home after being exposed – you can find the calculator <https://www.arphs.health.nz/measles-q-calculator/>

- If you think you have been exposed to measles, contact your GP immediately via telephone as you may need preventative treatment. After hours please contact Healthline on 0800 611 116.

### For more information

- Contact the haematology/oncology department during working hours for further advice regarding your oncology/haematology treatment ph. 367 0000 ext. 23826 (oncology) and ext. 25296 (haematology).

#### Visit:

- Auckland Regional Public Health Service: [www.arphs.health.nz](http://www.arphs.health.nz)
- Ministry of Health: [www.health.govt.nz](http://www.health.govt.nz)
- Immunisation Advisory Centre: [www.immune.org.nz](http://www.immune.org.nz) (or free phone – 0800 466 863)

*Last reviewed October 2019*