

Measles – are you protected?

Immunisation advice for every age group in Auckland.

Immunisation is the best protection against measles.

We have had a measles vaccine available since 1969 in New Zealand, but over the years, the age of vaccination and the number of doses has changed. In the 1970s and 80s, for example, children received just one dose of measles-only vaccine at around one year old. Today, children are recommended to receive two doses of MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine – the first at 15 months and the second at four years old.

Whatever your age and stage, the advice below will help you to find out whether you're protected against measles and what to do if you're not. **One dose of MMR vaccine gives you a 95% chance of being protected. Having a second dose increases that effectiveness to 99%.**

I have a baby who isn't immunised. What should I do?

Children who have not yet been immunised are at greatest risk of the disease. It's important they have their vaccines on time at 15 months and four years. If you are travelling overseas, please also see the *Travel* section below for advice. If you live in Canterbury, please visit the [CDHB website](#).

My pre-schooler isn't immunised. What should I do?

Children who have not yet been immunised are at greatest risk of the disease so it's important they have their vaccines on time. Children aged between 15 months and 4 years (outside of Canterbury where there is a [measles outbreak](#)) should receive their normal MMR vaccinations at 15 months and four years old. The vaccine is free for infants and children.

I'm pregnant. Am I at risk?

Non-immunised women who become ill with measles while pregnant risk miscarriage, premature labour and low birth weight infants. If you're pregnant and think you have measles, or have come in contact with someone with measles, you must call your general practice or lead maternity carer as soon as possible.

- If you were not immunised against measles before becoming pregnant, you should **not** receive the MMR vaccine during pregnancy.
- If you are of child bearing age you should avoid pregnancy for one month after having a dose of the MMR vaccine.
- If you are breastfeeding (and not pregnant) you can receive the MMR vaccine safely.

- If you were immunised against measles prior to becoming pregnant, you are almost certainly protected.

What about teenagers and adults younger than 29?

Many teenagers and young adults have missed one or both MMR vaccines and may be unaware that they are not immune. People who aren't sure whether they are up to date with their immunisations are being advised to check their Well Child Tamariki Ora health book or contact their general practice.

A single dose of MMR vaccine is 95% effective in preventing measles. People seeking a second MMR vaccine are being asked to be patient, so those who have received no vaccinations can get immunised first. Please wait a couple of weeks before calling your GP practice or medical centre to arrange a second vaccination.

I'm aged between 29 and 50. Does that mean I've had one dose of measles vaccine?

If you're aged between 29 and 50 you're likely to have received one dose of measles vaccine, which also means you're likely to be immune. One dose of vaccine is 95% effective in preventing measles. In addition, some people in this age group may have been infected with measles as it was still circulating in the community at the time – if you have had the disease and recovered, you are almost always immune. People seeking a second MMR vaccine are being asked to wait a couple of weeks before calling your GP practice or medical centre to arrange immunisation.

I was born before 1969 when there was no measles vaccine available. Am I at risk?

Before 1969, there was no national vaccination campaign against measles in New Zealand and almost everyone caught the disease as children as it is so infectious. Those who have recovered from the disease are almost always immune, so it is very rare to see any measles in people born in New Zealand before 1969. Measles vaccine was available in some other countries before 1969 so some adults who were born overseas may have received a measles vaccine. It is not therefore generally recommended that people over 50 years be vaccinated with MMR vaccine. People with concerns about whether they are immune are being asked to talk to their general practice or contact the Immunisation Advisory Centre ([0800 IMMUNE](http://www.immune.govt.nz)).

I am planning to travel overseas. Am I at risk of contracting measles?

The Ministry of Health is advising people travelling overseas to make sure they are fully immunised against measles before they go. Measles is regularly brought into the New Zealand through international travel. There are currently significant measles outbreaks overseas, including in the Philippines and in some European countries. Children who have not yet been immunised are at greatest risk of the disease. The Ministry of Health recommends that:

- Infants aged 6–15 months travelling to countries with serious measles outbreaks be given MMR vaccine before their travel. While measles immunisation is usually given at age 15 months and 4 years in New Zealand, the MMR vaccine can be given to children as young as 6 months.
- Because the vaccine's effectiveness is lower for babies under 12 months of age, if they are given the vaccine, they will still need two further doses of the vaccine at 15 months and 4 years for long term protection. Two doses of MMR vaccine gives long-lasting protection to at least 99 percent of people. MMR vaccination is free for eligible people, infants and children.

If you haven't been immunised, you should be cautious about travelling to any countries where there are serious measles outbreaks. An up-to-date list of countries with a measles outbreak can be found on the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website](https://www.cdc.gov/measles/travelers.html).

<https://www.cdc.gov/measles/travelers.html>

More information:

- For more information on symptoms and stopping the spread of measles, visit the Ministry of Health's [measles page](https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/conditions-and-treatments/diseases-and-illnesses/measles): <https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/conditions-and-treatments/diseases-and-illnesses/measles>
- For information specific to Canterbury and the measles outbreak there, please visit: [Canterbury DHB website](https://www.cdhb.health.nz/your-health/information-about-the-canterbury-measles-outbreak-march-2019/). <https://www.cdhb.health.nz/your-health/information-about-the-canterbury-measles-outbreak-march-2019/>