

October 2019

A Guide to Holding Events during a Measles Outbreak

Auckland is currently experiencing a large number of measles cases, especially in South Auckland.

Event organisers may be concerned their events may increase the spread of the disease and lead to vulnerable people becoming sick.

It is important to consider what you can practically and realistically do to reduce the risk of measles spreading at your event.

What's important to know -

1. Measles is spread through the air via coughing and sneezing. At present people are considered immune to measles if they have had at least one MMR vaccination or have had the illness previously.
2. Measles is currently spreading through a number of communities in Auckland, including through schools, day-care centres and workplaces.
3. For the most part, attending events and gatherings is unlikely to increase the risk of getting measles any more than just being in the community day to day. However there is a chance someone who is not immune may catch the disease at an event, especially if the event is held in a community with many people who are not vaccinated.
4. The events of most concern are those involving children under 5 years and young people. Pre-schoolers can get very sick with measles and young people are also vulnerable.
5. Events that include students from schools or families which have had measles recently are of highest concern. Please talk to Public Health if your event involves any community with recent known measles cases.
6. Organisers of events where people are invited or registered can ask attendees under the age of 30 years to make sure they are vaccinated with at least one MMR vaccine. This is the priority for vaccination. MMR needs to have been given at least 2 weeks before the event to be effective.
7. Events with young people should ask for vaccination records at least two weeks prior, if they are staying in shared accommodation or travelling together. They could encourage those not vaccinated to get an MMR two weeks prior. When school or youth groups are staying away together, managers will need to isolate the infected person and contact Public Health for advice on who else is at risk.

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8. Request that anyone sick with symptoms that could be measles such as a runny nose, fever, cough and sore red eyes stays at home, away from your event or gathering.
9. While Auckland Regional Public Health Service can legally direct that events be cancelled if there is a high risk to people's health, most events in this current outbreak would not warrant this step.

Advice for organisers of school events involving Auckland residents

- Do not include anyone who is unwell with any of the symptoms of measles - fever, runny nose, cough, sore red eyes or rash.
- We encourage organisers of camps, competitions and trips away to request proof of vaccination with at least one measles mumps rubella (MMR) vaccine for all students and accompanying adults (if under 50 years.)
- People are contagious before they get a rash. Know the other symptoms of measles – fever, runny nose, cough and sore red eyes.
- Understand how measles is spread – through coughing and sneezing airborne droplets of virus particles (not by sharing drink bottles or through food preparation).
- If travelling and staying away, be prepared – have a thermometer and masks in your first aid bag. Have a plan for isolating any people travelling with you who become unwell.
- Anyone who has been exposed to measles during travel won't start to be sick for around 10 - 14 days. Be aware of symptoms even after your travelling party returns home.