



MIDCENTRAL HEALTH

A division of MidCentral District Health Board providing specialist health and disability services

Measles Outbreak in Auckland

Information for Schools in the MidCentral District

12th September 2019

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Manawatu Mail Centre
Palmerston North 4442
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Key points:

The measles outbreak in Auckland continues with 1007 confirmed cases between 1 January and 12 September this year. Nationally there have been 1,214 cases.

While to date, the cases confirmed in the MDHB district have been brought in from other areas of the country, there is potential for the outbreak to become established here. This could have a significant impact on our schools and the wider community.

There are steps that we can take to keep ourselves safe.

Measles is a highly infectious disease that spreads very easily from person-to-person through the air. It can cause serious illness.

If you think you or your child may have measles, please contact your GP by phone before you visit. They will advise what to do.

Immunisation:

The best protection against measles is vaccination and **it is free** for those who need it. You can protect both yourself and the community by getting vaccinated - two doses of the measles vaccine (MMR) are all you need to protect yourself, your family and your community.

The MMR vaccine is part of the national immunisation schedule. It is usually given at ages 15 months and 4 years, but the first dose may be given at a younger age where there is a high likelihood of exposure to measles. Please talk to your GP practice for further information.

It is recommended that anyone between the ages of 4 years and 50 years who has no documented evidence of vaccination against measles, is vaccinated. Vaccination is not usually provided to people over the age of 50 years, as people born before 1969 are highly likely to have caught measles as a child, and will therefore be immune.

Immunisation Registers (Primary Schools only):

All primary schools are required to keep an up-to-date immunisation register of all children attending. The register provides an ongoing record of who has been immunised for what disease, and when the vaccination occurred. **Parents - If you have not provided this information to the school please do so at your earliest convenience.**

Public Health Service

MidCentral Health, Private Bag 11-036, Palmerston North 4442 **Phone:** 06 350 9110 **Fax:** 06 350 9111

Travel to Auckland:

Vaccination is particularly important for anyone planning a trip to Auckland. And it should take place at least two weeks prior to travelling. This will enable immunity to develop, providing protection from measles.

Sports Trips:

A number of schools are due to send teams away to sports tournaments around the country. It is recommended that all those (under 50 years of age) who are travelling check with their GP practice well in advance of their travel. If there is no documented evidence of two doses of MMR, another dose may be provided.

Schools may also be hosting sports teams from other areas. Event organisers are encouraged to work with our Public Health Service to consider the risks associated with the current measles outbreak to their participants.

Social Events and Examinations:

Some schools will be planning school balls, prize giving or other important social events. Anyone with measles will need to stay in isolation for five days after appearance of the rash. Contacts who are unvaccinated, and without evidence of immunity, may be required to stay away from other people until 14 days after their last contact with an infectious case. Families/whanau may wish to check their child's immunisation history so that they are able to attend these events.

The same applies to students with upcoming exams or internal assessments. Up-to-date vaccination enables schooling to continue uninterrupted.

Staffing levels:

All staff born after 1969 are advised to check their vaccination history, as in the event of a local outbreak, they too may be required to go into isolation if not fully protected. This can impact staffing levels at the school.

Further information on measles:

If you have concerns or would like more information about MMR vaccination please contact the Public Health Nurses 0800 153 042 or contact your health provider. **You can find more information about measles and vaccination to prevent measles on the Ministry of Health website: www.health.govt.nz – search term: measles**

Dr Patrick O'Connor
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MidCentral Public Health Service