

9 September 2019

Frequently asked questions for parents and schools

Do I need to be worried about catching measles?

Measles is highly contagious and easily spread.

Most people in the community are protected from measles because they are fully vaccinated or have already had measles.

What does fully vaccinated mean?

Fully vaccinated means having had the right number of vaccines for your age. For anyone 15 months – 4 years old, this means one MMR vaccine. For anyone older than 4 years old this means two MMR vaccines.

Why isn't everyone fully vaccinated?

Some people in the community can't be vaccinated because of allergy or immune conditions. Medical treatments such as chemotherapy can alter someone's immunity and make them vulnerable to getting measles even if they are fully vaccinated. Babies younger than 1 year old are too young.

Another group of people born between 1970 and 1990 might not realise they are not fully vaccinated. They might have only received one measles vaccine (such as MMR) as a child or might not have access to their immunisation records.

Others choose not to vaccinate.

What if I don't know my immunisation history?

If you are unsure of your vaccination status you should consider yourself unvaccinated. You should talk to your GP about getting your shots, there is no harm in having extra MMRs.

What should I do if I (or my child) have had contact with a measles case?

If you are fully vaccinated then you are protected and can't pass measles on to others.

What does isolation involve?

Measles has a long incubation period. If you have been exposed to measles or are showing symptoms and you are not vaccinated, you need to be isolated for 14 days. That means you need to stay home and avoid being in any public places.

Should I vaccinate my child early?

The MMR vaccination schedule for children outside of Auckland is unchanged. Children who have had the right number of vaccines for their age are considered to be fully vaccinated:

- One vaccine at 15 months old
- One vaccine at 4 years old

Advice for those travelling overseas or to Auckland is kept up to date on the Ministry of Health's website: <https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/conditions-and-treatments/diseases-and-illnesses/measles/2019-measles-outbreak-information>

Were the current measles cases already vaccinated?

All current Queenstown measles cases (15) are either unvaccinated or uncertain of their vaccination status. Some of those cases are not able to be vaccinated due to allergy or health conditions.

When is someone with measles contagious?

A person with measles is infectious from 5 days before and until 5 days after the rash appears (about 10 days in total). During this time the infected person needs to stay away from other people; children need to be kept home from school and adults from work, do not invite other children or visitors to your house.

I'm pregnant or have a weak immune system – am I at risk?

Pregnant women who haven't been vaccinated, and anyone with a weakened immune system, are at greater risk of measles complications. They or their caregiver should ask their doctor or lead maternity carer for advice.

What do I do if I think I might have measles?

If you suspect you have measles, phone your GP or Healthline free on 0800 611 116 for advice. Because measles is so infectious (easily passed on to other people), ring first rather than just turning up at your doctor's clinic.

Where can I find the best advice about measles vaccination?

The Immunisation Advisory Centre's latest advice on MMR vaccination during the 2019 measles outbreak:

<https://www.immune.org.nz/sites/default/files/resources/Written%20Resources/Administrative%20MMRQA20190904V01aFinal.pdf>

For more information relating to measles, please refer to the Ministry of Health's website:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/conditions-and-treatments/diseases-and-illnesses/measles>