

Measles Outbreak Update: What Families Need to Know

18 November 2025

Measles infection

Measles is a highly contagious virus that can be life threatening. Children who are receiving chemotherapy, or are within 6 months after completion of chemotherapy, or received a bone marrow transplant who remain immunosuppressed are at risk of a serious measles illness if exposed.

Measles is infective from 4 days before the onset of rash (the day of rash is called Day 0), until 4 days after the rash. The features of measles are initially fever, cough, runny nose and red eyes (conjunctivitis) and rash a few days after those symptoms.

‘Measles contacts’ are people who shared the same air with someone while they were infectious with measles. It typically takes 7-14 days for a contact who has become infected with the measles virus to start to have symptoms.

What to do if your child has been in contact with measles, or is suspected to be sick with measles

If you suspect your child has been exposed to measles or if you have been informed by public health of contact, you should contact your local paediatric hospital promptly. Your local hospital will assess the risk of exposure and arrange preventative immune globulin which needs to be given as soon as possible of exposure, and not later than 6 days from contact with a case. If your or your child are a contact, please do not attend a routine clinic appointment. Contact your local hospital so they can plan and advise you on your child’s visit.

Children who are immunosuppressed with measles often do not have a rash or other typical signs of measles. They can develop serious pneumonitis (lung infection) or encephalitis (brain infection). If you suspect your child has measles, you should contact your local hospital as soon as possible, so that appropriate arrangement can be made by the hospital to have your child assessed/diagnosed immediately. Contact the hospital prior so you and your child can be isolated on arrival. Your local hospital will have access to management guidelines and advice.

Individuals who are exposed to measles and are uncertain if they are immune should be isolated for 14 days – this is directed by Public Health. Isolation means staying away from a child who is immunosuppressed, staying away from other people, and not attending school, work or social events. In hospital we isolate those who are contacts of measles for longer than this due to the small risk of measles up to 21 days.

How can I protect my child from measles

Children who are immunosuppressed are unable to receive the measles vaccine. It is important to have family members vaccinated if they are not immunised, to reduce the risk of spreading measles to your child.

- Anyone born after 1 January 1969 who hasn't had two doses of measles vaccine after their first birthday, or has not had measles already, is at risk of catching measles. If you are at risk, we recommend you see your GP and receive a MMR vaccine as soon as possible.
- Ensure all healthy children in your household receive MMR at the correct scheduled time of age 12 months and 15 months of age. If they have had 2 doses of the vaccine (at least 4 weeks apart), they are considered immune from measles.
- If you are unsure if you have been vaccinated, you should see your GP and receive vaccination if you do not have written documentation of two doses of MMR.
- Two doses of MMR are free for anyone born after 1 January 1969.
- If your child's immune function has recovered after cancer therapy, and he/she has commenced re-immunisation, we recommend bringing the MMR vaccination forward so they can become immune as soon as possible.

With the current measles cases increasing in the community, **family members including siblings who are unimmunised should not visit the oncology ward, Bone Marrow Transplant Unit, daystay, or clinic.** If you are unimmunised and the primary caregiver of a child receiving immunosuppressive treatment, we recommend you receive a MMR vaccine as soon as possible.

If your child is presenting to the Children's Emergency Department or attending a waiting area with other children before a blood test or imaging, he or she should wear a mask until triaged to a prioritised area. Cover both the nose and the mouth and adjust the nose piece and straps to fit the mask properly.

Advice on daycare and school attendance

Children may continue to attend daycare and school. If your child is attending a school that does not have full immunisation uptake amongst staff and families, he or she is at higher risk of exposure, or your school has known cases should keep them at home for 2 weeks from the last reported case in your area.

The oncology services will continue to consult with paediatric infectious diseases team to review the situation and above advice, and provide updated information and recommendations as required. Resources from the Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora and KidsHeath are available and provide good information and advice.

- ^ <https://www.arphs.health.nz/public-health-topics/disease-and-illness/measles/>
- ^ <https://www.kidsheath.org.nz/measles-immunisation>