

Auckland Regional Public Health Service

Rātonga Hauora ā Iwi o Tamaki Makaurau



Working with the people of Auckland, Counties Manukau and Waitemata

Auckland Regional Public Health Service

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MEASLES ALERT MEDIA RELEASE

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Rising measles rates in Auckland prompt a reminder to get immunised

As Auckland Regional Public Health Service (ARPHS) responds to an expected rise in notified measles cases it is advising parents to check their children's immunisation record and get their children immunised now. ARPHS is seeing a higher number of cases in Auckland in 2009 than in several years previously.

Medical Officer of Health at ARPHS, Dr Brad Novak said, "Measles should be taken very seriously. This disease spreads easily through the air, especially from coughing and sneezing – it is highly infectious. It commonly causes ear infections and pneumonia, and may lead to other serious complications and can in some cases be fatal."

"Parents should check that their children's immunisations are up-to-date. Check your child's Plunket (Well Child) book, or check with your child's GP or practice nurse. If your child is not up-to-date with immunisations, then contact your GP or practice nurse and arrange to catch up as soon as possible – it's never too late to get immunised. This is a timely reminder to people not sure about their children's, or their own, immunity to measles to talk to their GP or practice nurse about it now," he said.

"Immunisation is the only effective way to protect against the disease. The measles, mumps and rubella vaccine (MMR) is given in two doses, normally at 15 months and 4 years of age giving up to 95% protection."

Look out for measles symptoms, particularly a red rash that starts on the face and moves to the rest of the body. Children with measles are often quite sick with runny nose, cough, sore eyes or fever as well as the rash. The rash comes on after a few days and lasts up to one week.

If you suspect your child or someone in your family may have measles call your GP or practice nurse for advice first, before going to the practice. This can help them to prevent the spread of the disease to others in the waiting room. As always, seek medical help if you are concerned about a family member who is unwell or if their condition is getting worse.

There have been 6 notified confirmed measles cases in the Auckland region since the beginning of this year compared with a yearly total of 2 in 2008 and 4 in 2007.

For more information call the Immunisation Advisory Centre free on 0800 IMMUNE (0800 466 863) or visit their website <http://www.immune.org.nz>

ARPHS's measles fact sheet is available on http://www.arphs.govt.nz/notifiable/disease_fact_sheets.asp

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