

IMMUNISATION WITH THE MEASLES VACCINE

What is measles immunisation?

- People obtain immunity by catching measles, or by being immunised with the Measles Mumps Rubella (MMR) vaccine.
- You are considered immune to measles if:
 - You were born before 1969 OR
 - You have been diagnosed by a GP as having had measles and recovered OR
 - You have received two doses of the MMR vaccine.

What are the recommendations for immunisation during this outbreak of measles?

- All children from age 12 months who have not had one dose of MMR should receive this as soon as possible.
- All children should receive their second dose as soon as possible (at least 28 days after the first dose)
- All adults born after January 1969 (up to 42 years old) who are not recorded as immunised, or who have only had one measles vaccination, should receive one dose of MMR now, with a second dose at least 28 days later for those who had no previous MMR.
- Immunisation is free.

How does immunisation prevent an outbreak of measles?

- Measles is a highly infectious disease that is easily passed from one person to another through breathing, coughing and sneezing.
- Although most people recover from measles, some can get very sick and the disease can lead to hospitalisation and, in rare cases, death.
- How fast measles spreads in the community is directly related to the number of people who have not been immunised.
- The fewer people who are immunised, the faster and wider measles will spread. If enough people are immunised then measles will not spread.
- The percentage of 18 month old children who have received their first measles immunisation is low at 79% in the greater Auckland region.
- Low rates of immunisation mean that we are now seeing a rise in the number of people, not just young children, becoming ill with measles.
- Being immunised is the only protection against measles. There is no treatment that cures measles.

What will getting immunised mean for me or my child?

- Over 90% of people are protected with one dose of the vaccine. This increases to over 95% if people have two doses.
- By getting immunised you are not only protecting yourself or your child – you'll also be stopping this disease from spreading in the community.
- How do I check my / my child's immunisation record?
 - Check your child's Tamariki Ora Health Book (also known as the Well Child Book).
 - Check your own records or call your GP.

MMR VACCINE

What is the Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine?

- The MMR vaccine is an injection that immunises people against measles, mumps and rubella.
- It is recommended that:

- Parents/caregivers of children should check that their child is fully immunised with MMR.
- If you do not know if you or your child has received the recommended doses of MMR, or whether you or they have definitely had measles in the past, call your GP to discuss.

Anyone, over 1 year of age, and who has not had two documented doses of measles vaccine in the past is eligible for free MMR vaccination.

Who should not receive the MMR vaccination?

- There are some people who cannot receive the MMR vaccine. However, it is important that their family and close contacts are immunised to help protect them.
- Pregnant women should not receive the vaccine.
- Anyone with a weakened immune system, such as cancer patients receiving treatment, should not receive the vaccine.
- Anyone who has had an anaphylactic reaction to gelatin, or the antibiotic neomycin, should not receive the vaccine.
- It is important you check with your GP or call Healthline on 0800 611 116 if you are not sure if you should be immunised.

Is the MMR vaccine safe?

- MMR vaccine has an excellent safety record and there is no increased risk from receiving the vaccine more than once.
- The MMR vaccine is made using a protein related to egg. Evidence shows that it is safe to give the MMR vaccine to nearly all children, even those who have a very severe reaction to eggs. Your GP can make special arrangements to give the MMR vaccine safely, in hospital if necessary.
- Scientific evidence, based on the records of millions of MMR vaccinations, shows no connection between MMR and autism or bowel disease.
- MMR vaccine does not contain thiomersal (mercury).

Are there side effects caused by the MMR vaccine?

- Serious side effects are rare. Side-effects of the vaccine are usually mild and, importantly, they are milder than the potentially serious consequences of having measles.
- The measles part of the vaccine starts to work 6 to 10 days after immunisation.
- Your child may develop a fever, a measles-like rash or go off their food. If this happens it usually starts about 6-10 days after immunisation and lasts a few days.
- Fits caused by having a fever (febrile convulsions) happen in about one in every 3,000 children around 6-12 days after a MMR vaccine. Febrile convulsions are caused by the fever and can happen in young after any fever. Febrile convulsions don't cause any long term harm and don't cause epilepsy.
- Fewer than one child in a million develops encephalitis (inflammation of the brain) after the MMR vaccine. However, if a child who hasn't been immunised catches measles, the chance is much higher at one in 1000.

The only thing that can stop you or your child catching measles is getting immunised. If you suspect you or your child is sick with measles phone your GP or Healthline on 0800 611 116.

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