

13/03/19

**To all Schools and Early Childhood Education Facilities.**

**Information regarding Measles Outbreak March 2019**

Two cases of measles have now been confirmed in Dunedin since 22 Feb both of which are linked to the current outbreak in Christchurch. One case was in contact with a local early childhood service whilst infectious.

Public Health South is working with staff and parents at the affected service to ensure that any unimmunised or vulnerable contacts are safe. This is a timely reminder to ensure that your records and children's vaccinations are up to date.

Measles is a highly infectious disease and is more serious than many people realise. Symptoms include fever, cough, red eyes and a runny nose, and then a rash which develops after about 4 days. About one in ten people with measles need to be hospitalised and 30% will develop complications.

The best measles prevention is two doses of the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine which is free for all New Zealand children.

**Prevent measles at your school/early childhood service**

1. Inform staff, parents and caregivers that there is measles in the community.
2. Check and update your Immunisation Register. These must be maintained by all schools/Early Childhood Education Centres under the Health (Immunisation) Regulations 1995. Registers allow unimmunised children who have been in contact with someone with measles to be quickly identified to help reduce the risk of further spread.
3. Ask parents and caregivers to make sure that their children's immunisations are up-to-date. Staff born during or after 1969 should also make sure that they are fully vaccinated for measles.

**Measles at your school/early childhood service**

1. If a child becomes unwell with possible measles while at your service, keep them separate from other children while waiting for them to be taken home. This helps reduce the risk of measles spreading. *Please ask parents to phone their GP's for advice and information before going to the surgery.*
2. GPs and health professionals are required to notify the local Medical Officer of Health of any suspected cases of measles. Once a notification is confirmed, your service will be contacted by public health staff who will provide information and advice.
3. A child or teacher with measles should stay away from school or ECE services for five days from the appearance of their rash or until recovered, depending on the advice of the Medical Officer of Health.
4. Unimmunised children who have been in contact with a measles case during the infectious stages should be excluded from the school or ECE service. The child may need isolation for up to 14 days after last contact with the infectious person. This includes exposed children who have only had one MMR vaccination.

**More Information**

For further health information on measles please go to the Ministry of Health website <http://www.moh.govt.nz> or the Immunisation Advisory Centre website <http://www.immune.org.nz>  
You can also call the Immunisation Advisory Centre toll-free line 0800 IMMUNE (0800 466 863) for advice.

Thank you for your support.

Yours sincerely,

**Marion Poore**  
**Medical Officer of Health**  
Public Health South  
A Division of the Southern District Health Board