

Measles information for workplaces and organisations

WHAT CAN I DO TO PREPARE FOR MEASLES?

Businesses can face serious disruption if a case of measles spreads through their workplace, as everyone who has been near the person (close contacts) will have to go into quarantine for up to 14 days, if they don't have proof of immunity. Encourage your staff to get vaccinated.

WHO IS A CLOSE CONTACT?

Anyone who has been in the same room or office as the person with measles is a close contact- the smaller the room and the longer the time, the greater the risk. Public Health South will help to assess the level of risk- often it is useful to think about who sits in the area close to the person with measles, and also who they had meetings with during their infectious period.

If the only exposure is for a short period- for example in a large lunchroom, a bathroom or a lift- there will be a lower risk, and those people would not be considered close contacts. There is still a small possibility however that others may catch measles. For that reason, it is useful to provide information widely to all staff, ask them to check their immunity, and to watch out for measles symptoms – high fever, runny nose, cough, sore red eyes and later a rash starting on the head and travelling down the body. There is information on the Southern Health website (www.southernhealth.nz).

Remind staff if they feel unwell to ring their general practice before they arrive, so they can be isolated from the waiting room.

I HAVE STAFF BORN OVERSEAS, HOW DO I DETERMINE THEIR IMMUNITY?

Staff exposed to measles need to have evidence of immunity, otherwise they should be in quarantine. Please check the chart below.

If close contacts have not documented evidence of a measles diagnosis or vaccination, they can see their doctor for a blood test to determine their immunity. They will have to stay home until the results prove immunity.

<p><i>People are immune and not at risk of measles if they...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have had two doses of Measles, Mumps, Rubella (MMR) vaccine documented in a Wellchild/Tamariki Ora book or at a doctor's practice. • Had a second MMR or other measles vaccine longer than two weeks ago • Were born before 1969, as they would have had measles as a child in New Zealand or overseas • Have been previously diagnosed with measles • Have had a blood test confirming immunity
<p><i>People are potentially not immune and are at risk of measles if they...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have had no doses of MMR vaccine • Have had only had one dose of MMR or other measles vaccine. • Have never had measles or have a severely weakened immune system.

IF STAFF ARE VACCINATED STRAIGHT AWAY, CAN THEY COME TO WORK?

It takes two weeks for an MMR vaccination to protect an individual, so staff who have been exposed to measles will still need to stay home. Encouraging your staff to get vaccinated right away means they are protected if there are further measles cases, and further outbreaks- but it won't protect them for exposure that's already happened. MMR also protects staff against mumps and rubella, two other infectious diseases that may require quarantine.

THERE ARE PREGNANT WOMEN (OR SOMEONE IMMUNOCOMPROMISED) IN OUR ORGANISATION – WHAT DO I TELL THEM?

Any pregnant woman who knows she is immune or has been vaccinated with two doses of MMR is not considered to be at risk. Non immune pregnant women who may have been in contact with the measles case should see their lead maternity carer or doctor. Anyone receiving cancer treatment or with a weakened immune system should also seek medical advice.

THE PERSON WITH MEASLES PREPARED FOOD, IS THIS A WORRY?

Measles is an airborne virus, not one transmitted through food. It is the people breathing the same air in the same room as the food handler who are most at risk, not those eating the food.

CAN I GET MY STAFF VACCINATED?

Encourage your staff under the age of 50 to get a catchup vaccination at their doctor for free – please note there may be a service fee charged. Many in the age group 18 – 30 years are not vaccinated.

THE STAFF MEMBER HAS HAD CONTACT WITH MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC?

If the case (person with measles) has been near members of the public, in the same room or space for instance, and you have contact details for these people, you could alert them and suggest they watch out for the symptoms. Measles is, however, circulating widely in the community, so consider whether their risk is higher than if they were out in the community.

If the staff member has been in contact with measles but does not currently have measles, you do not have to do anything, unless they are subsequently confirmed with measles.

THE STAFF MEMBER HAS TRAVELLED ON A PLANE?

Please ask the person with measles to tell Public Health South if they have travelled outside of the Southern District, so we can let other public health services know. If the person travelling was exposed to measles but does not have confirmed measles themselves, we don't need to know.

DO PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN EXPOSED TO MEASLES HAVE TO TELL OTHERS?

You do not need to tell anyone else that you may have been exposed to measles, or are in quarantine, except for visitors. If you are confirmed with measles by your doctor or a test, then Public Health South will be in touch with you to discuss the close contacts have been, including this includes the workplace.

I'VE ONLY HAD ONE MMR – DO I HAVE TO GET ANOTHER VACCINATION, OR STAY AWAY FROM WORK?

You are not considered immune during this outbreak if you have only had one MMR (Measles, Mumps and Rubella) vaccine.

It is a good idea to have a second MMR, but this should be at least a month after your first MMR. Children should have an MMR at 15 months, and their second dose is scheduled for 4 years of age.