



Gina White (far right), President of the Southland Literacy Society gives Lee Pemberton and Victoria Morton a book for their new daughter, Elsie Pemberton at Southland Hospital Maternity Ward

Books for Babies celebrated

Over the last 22 years, it's not only been babies delivered in Southland maternity units, but books too, thanks to the 'Books for Babies' programme.

The programme is one of the Southland Literacy Association's initiatives, and ensures all tamariki/children born in Southland receive a literacy pack containing a book almost immediately after birth together with information explaining how to read to a baby, and recommended book titles.

Convenor of the Books for Babies programme Daphne Lindsay says she's delighted with the success of the programme and how long it's been running.

"It's never too early to start reading to babies. It promotes bonding in the

early months and years from the joy of sharing a quality children's picture book. Listening to, sharing and viewing books also helps children to develop the use and understanding of vocabulary."

The Books for Babies initiative started in 1998 as a biennial project, and since 2007 has been running every year. It's been made possible over the years thanks to local sponsorship including the Invercargill Licensing Trust Foundation, Community Trust South and Maitaia Licensing Trust.

Gina White, President of Southland Literacy Society says she's also thankful for the support of the volunteers from the committee who label, pack and deliver the literacy packs to the maternity units in Southland.

Public Health officials urge safe handling of potting mix

Before handling potting mix:



FACE MASK

Wear a well-fitting disposable face mask



GLOVES

Wear gloves



OPEN WITH SCISSORS

Open potting mix and compost bags carefully with scissors



DAMPEN

Reduce dust by dampening down potting mix or compost



OPEN AIR

Work in a well ventilated area outside



WASH HANDS

Wash your hands after handling and before removing your mask

Southern public health officials are reminding people about the importance of safe handling of potting mix, compost and soil to protect themselves against a potentially fatal illness, Legionnaires' disease.

Dr Susan Jack, Medical Officer of Health Southern DHB, says Legionnaires' disease, also known as legionellosis, is a type of pneumonia caused by legionella bacteria that commonly live in potting mix, compost and soil.

"In 2020 there have been six cases of legionellosis including one fatality in the Southern District, which followed 20 cases notified in Southern and, sadly, two fatalities in 2019."

Dr Jack says flu-like symptoms can appear two to ten days after exposure to legionella bacteria. Symptoms present may be a cough, shortness of breath, fever, muscle pains/aches, headaches, nausea and vomiting.

"If you experience any of these symptoms after gardening, we recommend that you talk to your doctor and inform them of your gardening activity. This will help them determine whether to test you for legionellosis. Early treatment is usually effective, however if you become very sick hospitalisation may be required."

Risk factors for developing Legionnaires' disease are:

- Aged 60+
- Current/former-smoker
- Pre-existing conditions/compromised immune systems.

New unit opens at Dunedin Hospital Emergency Department

Dunedin Hospital Emergency Department is putting an end to patients lying down on trolleys and stretchers if they are well enough to sit in a chair.

A new Ambulatory Care Unit in Dunedin Emergency Department was officially opened this week. The area has eight relaxing chairs and allows patients who are able to walk and who are not confined to bed to have a comfortable space while they are seen by the Emergency Department team.

The new area was created following a successful "Fit2Sit" trial last year in the department where one bed space was converted into two chair spaces.

"Looking after patients in this way is really progressive and puts the

Emergency Department at the forefront in delivering care," says Clinical Director of Dunedin Hospital Emergency Department, Dr Rich Stephenson.

Charge Nurse Manager Janet Andrews says she's delighted with area has opened. "Having chairs instead of beds means more patients can be seen in the emergency department as two chairs take the space of one bed, and it allows beds to be freed up for our patients who are too ill to sit in a chair."

"Patients also benefit by staying as active as possible – if they are independent they are more likely to go home sooner."



Left to right Dunedin Hospital Emergency Department Charge Nurse Manager, Janet Andrews, Clinical Director, Dr Rich Stephenson and SDHB Chief Executive, Chris Fleming with Kaiawhina Te Ara Hauora, Wendi Raumati trying out one of the chairs

Free catch-up on measles vaccination for 15-30 year olds

Southern DHB Medical Officer of Health Dr Susan Jack is calling on young people aged 15 to 30 years who haven't been immunised for measles to make it a priority to get a FREE catch-up MMR vaccine.

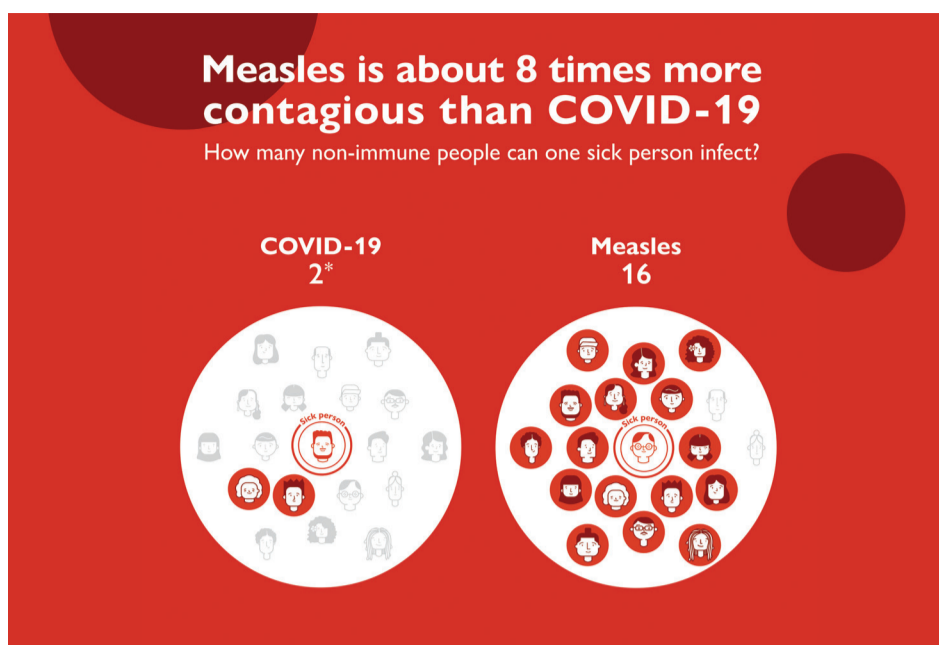
Measles is a serious disease that is about eight times more contagious than COVID-19. Getting immunised is the best way to protect young people, their whānau and community from catching and spreading measles.

Dr Jack's call to Southern youth and their whānau is part of the national measles campaign, recently launched by the Ministry of Health, the focus of which is to improve the immunity against measles amongst all people in the 15 to 30 year age group.

During the campaign the Measles Mumps and Rubella (MMR) vaccine will be offered free to anyone 15 to 30 years who has not yet been fully immunised against measles. This catch-up campaign for 15 to 30 year olds is a one dose campaign.

Dr Jack says, "Many people born in New Zealand between 1990 and 2005 are not fully protected because a higher than usual number of them did not have their scheduled childhood MMR vaccinations.

"In recent years Southern has experienced a significant measles outbreak in Queenstown and cases in



Dunedin, Oamaru, Wanaka and Gore. In Southern towns and cities there were 72 cases of measles in 2019. New Zealand wide there were more than 2,000 cases in 2019, of which 41% were Pacific peoples and 24% Māori.

"People who have come from overseas, including the Pacific Islands, may have had different vaccines that may not fully protect them against measles, mumps and rubella," she says.

"If you haven't been immunised, or you cannot find your childhood vaccination records and your GP does not have a

copy of them, then the Ministry of Health recommends you have the MMR vaccine now.

"There are no additional safety concerns with having an extra dose. However, women who are pregnant cannot have the MMR vaccine," she says.

Young people can get their FREE catch-up vaccinations now from General Practices across the Southern district.

Board Update



David Perez, Acting Chair

Kia ora, and welcome to my debut column as Acting Chair for Southern DHB. You will know I have assumed this role following Dave Cull's decision to step down last month, and we wish him every strength with the health challenges he is facing.

I do not know how many monthly columns I may have ahead of me; the newly appointed Minister of Health is yet to name a successor to this role. But in the meantime, it is an honour to lead the Southern health system as we progress our ongoing work in the area I have dedicated my entire career to – enhancing health services for the community.

It was especially heartening to start this new role by receiving some great news.

Southern DHB has been awarded \$5.9million in capital funding and \$1.2million in initiative funding from the Ministry of Health to support improvements in targeted areas, including:

- An additional CT scanner for Dunedin Hospital
- A fifth theatre for Southland Hospital
- Rolling out the prioritisation tool to identify patients most in need of elective surgery
- Strengthening telehealth services to provide video consultations
- Direct access to scans and other imaging for primary care
- Support to deliver respiratory services in the community
- Support for direct access to endocrinology services
- Support for rheumatology services.

All DHBs were requested to put in bids several weeks ago for a total pool of \$57 million in contestable funding. Southern DHB received nearly double the funding we would have received if it had been determined on a population basis. This was more than our fair share and I want to acknowledge the effort of the team led by Executive Director Specialist Services Patrick Ng who put in the bids – the outcome is a credit to them all.

Thank you to everyone working to care for people across our communities, and I look forward to sharing more of our highlights and progress with you.

Ngā mihi nui,
David

Southern doctor finalist for Clinical Educator of the Year Award



Southern DHB Consultant Neurologist Dr David Gow (pictured) is in the running to win the prestigious 2020 Confederation of Postgraduate Medical Council (CPMEC) Clinical Educator of the Year Award.

The annual award recognises clinical educators across Australia and New Zealand who have made a major contribution to the education and training of junior doctors.

The Medical Council of New Zealand has already announced Dr Gow as the New Zealand winner, and his nomination will be considered alongside the Australian winners in a virtual awards ceremony on 24 November.

Southerners with cold/flu symptoms urged to get tested

With new community cases of COVID-19 in Auckland, Southern DHB Medical Officer of Health Dr Michael Butchard is reminding Southerners to get tested if they have any cold or flu symptoms.

"While there is no information indicating an increased risk in our region from the Auckland cases, it is an important reminder that we must remain vigilant.

"The best way we can do this is for anyone with cold and flu symptoms, however minor, to call 0800VIRUS19 (0800 847 8719) to arrange for a FREE test. Phone lines will be staffed over the weekend between 9am to noon, and weekdays from 9am to 4pm.

"Southerners are stoic and don't want to overreact, but by getting a COVID-19 test to check even minor symptoms, you are helping protect our wider community. The simple act of an individual deciding

to get a test is what has uncovered New Zealand's recent outbreaks over the past months.

"Please also maintain good hand hygiene, with regular handwashing or use of hand sanitizer, remember to cough/sneeze into your elbow and keep using the COVID tracer app or contact tracing sheets to record your movements. If you are sick, stay home until you are symptom free," he said.

WellSouth Medical Director Dr Stephen Graham urged people not to be complacent: "Testing only takes a few minutes, it's free and you are helping ensure our communities are COVID-free."

Dr Butchard praised the response of Southerners to the COVID-19 threat so far, saying that their sense of community responsibility and willingness to respond to public health messaging was encouraging.

How to make your own face covering

