

5 September 2019

Dear Parent/Caregiver

Port Chalmers School has been advised that since 22nd August, five people have been confirmed with measles in the Southern region and the disease is now likely to be spreading in the wider community.

The number of cases may seem relatively small in comparison with the population, but one person with measles can infect many others.

PHS advises that immunisation is the best protection against measles.

Immunisation is safe, effective and free.

Measles is serious and highly infectious viral disease that causes fever, cough, sore red eyes and a rash. It can make people very sick. People with measles can be infectious even before they start feeling unwell. While almost all people will make a complete recovery, it can lead to hospitalisation and in rare cases, death.

Parents/guardians need to find out whether their children are protected against measles.

Regarding your child's immunisation status:

- **If your child has not received their measles immunisation (MMR vaccine)** as per the Immunisation Schedule (1st MMR at 15 months and 2nd MMR at four years), call your GP as soon as possible. Arrange a time to immunise your child as it is never too late.
- **Infants and children who are not travelling to Auckland** or overseas to a country with a measles outbreak are recommended to get their MMR vaccinations as per the Immunisation Schedule at 15 months and 4 years.
- **Infants aged 6 to 11 months who are travelling to Auckland** or overseas to a country with a measles outbreak, can have their first MMR vaccination (MMR0) after consulting with their GP, however they will still need to have the MMR vaccinations at 15 months and four years as per the Immunisation Schedule.
- **Infants aged 12 to 14 months who are travelling to Auckland** or overseas to a country with a measles outbreak, should receive all four 15 month vaccinations (MMR, varicella, Hib and PCV10) at least two weeks before travelling to allow immunity against measles to develop.
 - **If your child has received only one measles immunisation (i.e. one MMR vaccination)**, call your GP as soon as possible to see if you need to arrange a time to immunise your child with their second MMR. Two measles immunisations provide better protection than one.
 - **If your child has received two measles immunisations, or they have definitely had doctor-diagnosed measles infection in the past**, they are considered protected. Over 99% of people who are fully immunised are protected from measles.
 - **If you are not sure of your child's immunisation records**, look in your child's plunket book or check with your GP.
 - **If your child is not immune or you choose not to immunise your child**, they are not protected from measles. If they come into contact with someone with measles, they will likely have to be excluded from school or ECEC for up to 14 days.

Signs of measles

It usually takes 10 to 14 days for someone who has caught measles to start showing symptoms.

If your child develops a high fever, runny nose, cough, sore red eyes, or a rash see a doctor (call ahead to alert your doctor about the possibility of measles before visiting and take this letter along).

If your child has a weakened immune system (e.g. if they have an inherited immune problem or are receiving chemotherapy for cancer), please contact your doctor to discuss further.

If this occurs: Call your GP or Healthline (0800 611 116) as soon as possible for advice. Your GP will advise the safest time for your child to return to school. If your GP suspects measles, they will arrange for testing and Public Health South will be in contact to offer support and any follow up regarding contact tracing.

For more information about measles, contact Healthline on 0800 611 116 or visit <https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/conditions-and-treatments/diseases-and-illnesses/measles>

Kind regards
Vicki Nicolson
Principal

