

Measles Alert

"In January this year there were 11 reported cases of measles in the Waikato region and two in the Bay of Plenty and Lakes areas," says Dr Neil de Wet, Medical Officer of Health. "It is an important time to check if you and your whānau are up to date with the measles immunisations."

Measles is highly infectious and is spread from person to person through the air by breathing, sneezing or coughing. Just being in the same room as someone with measles can lead to infection if you are not immune. Measles can be serious with around one in ten people who get measles needing to be hospitalised.

The vaccine that protects against measles is the MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine. "MMR provides effective protection against measles and is completely free for children and adults. MMR is given in two doses, normally at 15 months and four years of age, as part of the routine childhood immunisations," says Dr de Wet.

"The first early symptoms of measles are fever, runny nose, sore red eyes and cough. After three to five days a red, blotchy rash appears on the face and head and then spreads down the body," says Dr de Wet. "If you think you or someone in your family may have measles, stay at home and phone your doctor to alert them of your symptoms and allow them to make arrangements to assess you safely and without infecting other people, or call Healthline on 0800 611 116 for advice."

For more information:

- Toi Te Ora Public Health website: www.toiteora.govt.nz/measles
- Immunisation Advisory Centre free phone: 0800 IMMUNE (0800 466 863)
- Immunisation Advisory Centre website: www.immune.org.nz
- Ministry of Health website: www.moh.govt.nz/immunisation
- Don't Assume You're Immune website: www.getimmunised.org.nz
- Public Health and Screening Services: 07 3437747