

Canterbury Measles Outbreak – Information for schools and EEC

Measles is spreading in Canterbury. It is a highly infectious virus that can be life threatening. Complications occur in about one in three people, and for them measles can be serious, even fatal.

What are the symptoms?

Measles symptoms are a:

1. cough or runny nose or conjunctivitis **AND**
2. fever above 38.5^oc **AND**
3. a rash

If you're sick stay home and telephone your GP team for advice any time of day or night. Please do not go to your GP in person as you may spread the illness to others. Anyone with measles needs to be isolated from the time they become ill until 5 days after the rash has appeared.

Who is protected from measles?

People who have had two MMR vaccinations (typically given at 15 months and 4 years) are immune from measles. People born before 1969 will have been exposed to the measles virus and will have acquired immunity.

Those born between 1969 and 1990 are considered to have a good level of protection. This group were offered one measles vaccine and evidence suggests that one dose of MMR protects 95% of people from developing measles.

What is the priority group for vaccination?

To ensure vaccines are being provided to those in greatest need, a vaccination programme is being rolled out by general practices which prioritises those who need it most – that's those most at risk of harm if they get measles.

The immediate priority is children aged 12 months to 13 years who have never been immunised. GP teams are also focusing on providing the vaccine to young adults aged 14 years to 28 years who have never been immunised.

As more vaccine becomes available the MMR vaccine will be made available to other priority groups.

What happens if there's been a case of measles in a school or early childhood education centre?

Most students in Canterbury have good immunity against measles.

Health authorities will be in contact with any school or early childhood centre where there has been a confirmed case and advise accordingly. If there is a confirmed case at their pre-school, child care centre or school, then parents should keep their unimmunised child at home.

As a general rule, a contact is considered someone who has been in a confined space with a confirmed measles case (while the case was infectious) up to one hour after the case was there.

Should students attend outside of school events?

Students who feeling unwell with measles-like symptoms, or who are not fully vaccinated against the measles, should avoid events as there will be a risk of either catching or 'passing on' measles.

More information about measles is available at <http://www.immune.org.nz>