

11 JUL 2019



Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request of 13 June 2019 under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) for:

"The Immunisation handbook states

'11.5.2 Catch-up

Two doses of MMR (at least four weeks apart) are recommended and funded for any child, adolescent or adult who is known to be susceptible to one or more of the three diseases.

Adults born in New Zealand before 1969 are considered to be immune to measles as circulating virus and disease was prevalent prior to the introduction of measles vaccine in 1969'

My request is for information about three questions.

- 1. What direct evidence exists to support this assertion? Can you provide me references or a copy of key information.*
- 2. What is the individual probability of having acquired immunity for persons in this group'; or of not being immune?*
- 3. Is there a decision paper supporting the Ministry policy of neither testing for immunity, or offering immunisation to those born prior to 1969, which discusses risks and benefits? If so could I have a copy please,"*

The information held by the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) pertaining to your request is set out below.

- 1. What direct evidence exists to support this assertion? Can you provide me references or a copy of key information?*

Each chapter of the Immunisation Handbook is followed by the references for that chapter. The references to the measles chapter is available on the Ministry's website:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/immunisation-handbook-2017-2nd-ed-mar18-v4.html#refs11>.

- 2. What is the individual probability of having acquired immunity for persons in this group'; or of not being immune?*

Measles is a highly infectious airborne virus. Contracting the infection also gives life-long immunity to the virus. It is expected that individuals born before the vaccine was

implemented would be immune, as they would usually be infected in the first years of life. However, it is possible that a small proportion of individuals have not been exposed to the infection, particularly in isolated areas but this is uncommon. This is reflected by the immunity estimates and the age of the measles cases reported in New Zealand in recent years. More information can be found in the article by Hayman et al, "Global importation and population risk factors for measles in New Zealand: a case for highly immunised populations" available online: <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/epidemiology-and-infection/article/global-importation-and-population-risk-factors-for-measles-in-new-zealand-a-case-study-for-highly-immunized-populations/AA7A61E06F421945937D0BCB01DD11A8>.

3. *Is there a decision paper supporting the Ministry policy of neither testing for immunity, or offering immunisation to those born prior to 1969, which discusses risks and benefits? If so could I have a copy please?*

The Communicable Diseases Control Manual describes the standard practice for public health services to follow for the prevention and control of notifiable diseases. This manual includes a definition of those who are presumed to be immune to measles and is publicly available on the Ministry's website: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/communicable-disease-control-manual/measles>. However, the Ministry is not aware of a single 'decision paper' relating to your request.

I trust that this information fulfils your request. You have the right, under section 28 of the Act, to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request.

Please be aware that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry's website.

Yours sincerely



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