



MANATŪ HAUORA

Were you born after 1969? You might need to get immunised against measles

Measles is a serious disease that can make you very sick. It's even more contagious than COVID-19 so spreads fast. Getting immunised is the best way to protect you, your whānau and community from catching and spreading measles.

Protect yourself against measles – it's easy and free

Say yes if a health professional offers you a free measles immunisation.

You can ask your GP for a measles immunisation. It's free. You can also get a free immunisation at some pharmacies if you're 16 or older.

Check if your local pharmacy offers the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) immunisation. If it does, you can just turn up. You don't need an appointment. The pharmacist will take you to a private space in the pharmacy to do this.

The measles immunisation is called MMR. It helps protect you against three serious diseases: measles, mumps and rubella. Not sure if you're already immunised against measles?

Lots of people born between 1989 and 2004 didn't get fully immunised when they were children. This puts you at risk of catching and spreading measles. Ask your doctor, parent or caregiver if you had two doses of the MMR vaccine as a child. If you don't know, it's best to get immunised. It's safe to have an extra dose of the MMR vaccine.

There are good reasons to get immunised

- **You could get very sick if you get measles.** You can have complications like pneumonia, seizures and swelling of the brain. People can die from measles.
- **You might make others very sick if you get measles.** Some people can't have the MMR vaccine because they're very young or have a disease that affects their immune system. Being immunised means you're less likely to catch measles and spread it to vulnerable people.
- **If you get measles when you're pregnant, it could affect your baby.** This can have life-long impacts on your baby's health. You may go into labour early or your baby may have a low birth weight. You can't have the MMR vaccine when you're pregnant.
- **You could miss out on earning, learning or having fun.** If you haven't had the MMR vaccine and are in the same room as someone with measles, you will have to isolate for up to two weeks. This is to make sure you don't have measles and can't pass it on to others.
- **We recently had a measles outbreak in New Zealand.** More than 2,000 people got measles in 2019. 700 had to go to hospital. Māori and Pacific peoples were particularly affected. We need 95 percent of people to be immune to reach 'community immunity' (sometimes known as 'herd immunity') and help stop future outbreaks.

- **Measles is only a plane-ride away.** Measles is still common in many countries. People can bring it into New Zealand without knowing. You could also be exposed if you travel to certain countries overseas.

The MMR vaccine works by helping your body to make antibodies that fight measles

The MMR vaccine is given as an injection in your arm. When you've had the MMR vaccine, your immune system will fight the measles virus if you come into contact with it for real. This protects you – and those around you – from **getting sick or spreading measles**.

What's in the vaccine?

The MMR vaccine is made of small amounts of weakened forms of the measles, mumps and rubella germs. These trigger your immune system to make antibodies to fight the germs. The vaccine has a few other ingredients to keep it stable and ready to go. These ingredients are in tiny amounts and also found in common foods and drinks.

The MMR vaccine has an excellent safety record

MMR vaccines have been used in New Zealand since 1990. The MMR vaccine is very effective. After one dose, about 95% of people are protected from measles and after two doses, more than 99% of people are protected.

A small number of people who are fully immunised may still get sick. But they usually get a milder illness than people who haven't been immunised.

Fewer than one in 10 people may get a mild response between five and 12 days after immunisation, like a mild fever, a rash, or swollen glands.

Other mild reactions that can happen (usually within one or two days of being immunised) include:

- headache;
- a slight fever (feeling hot);
- nausea (feeling sick);
- fainting or feeling faint (eating beforehand helps with this);
- generally feeling a bit unwell.

The chance of having a serious side-effect from the MMR vaccine is extremely rare and would happen within 20 minutes of being immunised. That's why you'll be asked to stay for 20 minutes after you have the MMR vaccine. If a severe allergic reaction does happen, the vaccinator can effectively treat it. Your doctor, nurse or pharmacist will talk about possible reactions with you at the time. There are very few people who can't be immunised.

Talk with your health professional if you've had a serious reaction to a vaccine in the past, are being treated for cancer or a severe illness, or had a blood transfusion in the last year. You can't have the MMR vaccine when you're pregnant.

Some other countries only immunise against measles and rubella. So, even if you were immunised against measles overseas, make sure you get your free MMR vaccine in New Zealand so you're protected from mumps too. Mumps causes swelling in the glands around your face. It can lead to meningitis in about one in 10 people.

Want more information? You can:

- Contact your doctor;
- talk to your local pharmacy; or
- call Healthline on 0800 611 116