

MEDIA RELEASE

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Think it's measles? Phone first before visiting your GP

While there have been no measles cases confirmed in the Nelson Marlborough region during the current outbreak, there have been 14 suspect cases notified by GPs to the Nelson Marlborough Public Health Service in September, bringing the total number of notifications for 2019 to 38.

As Nelson Marlborough continues to hold onto its measles-free status – one of only four DHB areas in this position – the region's primary health organisations are urging people to phone their GP practice or Healthline first before bringing measles symptoms into a clinic waiting room.

It is also important to let your GP practice know about symptoms, via the phone, because while someone with measles symptoms might not need medical attention – the Public Health Service needs to know of all suspect cases, via a GP.

Glenis McAlpine (Programmes Manager – Clinical Services and Integration, Marlborough Primary Health Organisation) and Dr Sue Stubbs (Clinical Director, Nelson Bays Primary Health), say that the isolation of any measles cases are critical to ensure measles is not quickly spread. They say that a practice nurse, or Healthline nurse, can give advice over the phone as a starting point.

The primary health organisations' message is backed by Nelson Marlborough Public Health Service Medical Officer of Health Dr Andrew Lindsay.

"The last case of measles in our region was in November 2018, unrelated to the current outbreak. The person was placed in home isolation before reaching the point that they become infectious to others, and as a result no-one else caught measles. This demonstrates the importance of isolation," Dr Lindsay says.

MMR vaccine availability

- Parents and caregivers are urged to ensure their children's measles (MMR) vaccine is up to date; children require MMR vaccinations at 15 months and 4 years to be immune. Free immunisation for these age groups is available from a GP or practice nurse.
- Other people who are eligible for free immunisation may go on a waiting list at this stage
- If you are planning to take unvaccinated children younger than 5 to Auckland or counties with current measles outbreaks, it's recommended that they be vaccinated two weeks before travel. A GP can advise whether vaccination is appropriate for babies younger than 12 months old.

Ends

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