
COMMUNITY AND PUBLIC HEALTH

To Canterbury General Practitioners and Practice Nurses

23 December 2019

Canterbury

District Health Board

Te Poari Hauora o Waitaha

Telephone: 03 687 2600

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Measles Vaccination Update

The Ministry of Health has asked us to pass the following information on to you.

Public health measures being implemented by some Pacific Island Countries

The World Health Organization and the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade have advised that a number of Pacific Island countries are implementing additional public health measures, including travel measures, in response to the current measles outbreaks. American Samoa, Republic of Marshall Islands, Tokelau and Solomon Islands are requiring travellers to show evidence of measles vaccination at least 2 weeks before entry to these countries. Other Pacific countries such as Samoa and Fiji have not formally implemented travel measures, however, it is recommended travellers to these countries are vaccinated against measles.

Primary care providers should ensure any travellers to Pacific Island countries requiring proof of vaccination, or any other countries where there are current measles outbreaks, are vaccinated at least 14 days prior to their arrival and proof of vaccination issued. Proof of vaccination may include medical records, laboratory tests, immunisation record summary, or letters from GPs or vaccinators.

In addition to advice previously issued regarding eligibility for vaccination, unvaccinated, New Zealanders over the age of 50 can be given MMR if vaccination is required for proof of entry, or is necessary for protection in countries currently experiencing measles outbreaks. It is expected that vaccinators will use clinical discretion and judgement when making decisions about prioritising and eligibility for vaccination.

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Measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccination of Pacific temporary migrant workers including those enrolled in the Recognised Seasonal Employee (RSE) Scheme

Due to the ongoing measles outbreaks across the Pacific, the Director- General of Health has authorised health providers to access MMR vaccine for unimmunised Pacific temporary migrant workers, including those on the RSE scheme. The vaccination of temporary migrant workers from the Pacific region will prevent people taking this potentially fatal illness back to their home countries, as well as reducing the risk of further spread of measles within New Zealand. Pacific temporary migrant workers are classified as non-residents and are therefore, under normal circumstances, not eligible for access to publicly funded health care in New Zealand, including access to the MMR vaccine. However, the Ministry of Health has worked with PHARMAC, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and Immigration New Zealand to enable access to one dose of MMR vaccine for workers who are non-residents.

Providers will not be able to claim the Immunisation Benefit for any vaccine given to Pacific temporary migrant workers. The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) will notify employers that they will be expected to pay for any administration fee. The vaccine itself can be provided free of charge to the workers. The Ministry of Health is working with PHARMAC to establish a process to access MMR vaccine for Pacific temporary migrant workers in 2020.

However, we recognise that the urgent priority is workers travelling back to Samoa for the holiday period and those returning to Pacific Island countries that now require proof of vaccination before entry e.g. the Solomon Islands. For this group, you may use your current stock of MMRII brand (manufactured by MSD) vaccine until further information is provided.

Providers need to supply a signed record of vaccination for the person to keep and, where possible, should record the vaccination on the National Immunisation Register. We also encourage employers to be aware of (and keep a record) immunity against measles in their workforce.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "A. R. G. Humphrey". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a thick, dark line.

Dr Alistair Humphrey

Medical Officer of Health

Community and Public Health

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