

**Important information for all GP teams, Community Pharmacists, Community Nursing and Aged Care Facilities – Please share this with everyone in your team**

**Current Status**

- Measles is the most infectious and easily transmissible of all human viruses. The virus is shed by infected individuals up to four days prior to the development of symptoms, enhancing its spread even further.
- As you are aware there is a measles outbreak in Canterbury. The first case was identified on the 22<sup>th</sup> of February in Rangiora and since then there have been a total of 12 confirmed and 5 under investigation. All confirmed cases in Canterbury have been the same genotype and are likely linked to the same index case who has not yet been identified. Measles is no longer endemic in New Zealand; all outbreaks are linked to overseas travel.
- Measles cases are increasing and have been identified in different parts of Christchurch, despite contact tracing efforts.
- We will be asking general practice to help contain this outbreak by increasing vaccination coverage for our at risk population.
- The at risk and target populations mentioned below are based on the ages of all confirmed cases and immunisation status of those cases to date.

**Recommendations in General Practice**

- We are working with both with the Ministry of Health and Community & Public Health to establish where our vaccination efforts are going to be best targeted.
- Please begin preparing for the need of increased MMR vaccination and possible vaccination clinics in your practice.
- Details outlining exactly what is being proposed will be released over the next few days in a further update.

**Who's at Risk**

- Two doses of MMR confer good protection.
- People born before 1969 are considered to be low risk and do not require vaccination.
- The normal schedule for childhood vaccinations provides our under <5 year olds good protection.
  - Within the schedule is the opportunity to bring forward the 15 month MMR vaccination to 12 months.
  - C&PH is considering whether there is a need to bring forward the 4 year old MMR, and will notify us if that is required.
- Our target populations for vaccination clinics are likely to be:
  - Adults aged 29 to 50 (this cohort only received one dose of MMR)
  - Children and young adults (age range 5 years to 28 years) who are either not immunised or who have only received one MMR dose to date.
  - Children 12mths to 5 years who have never received any doses of MMR.

**Practical Concerns**

- **Vaccine availability.** Propharma are ordering in additional vaccine for Canterbury; we are working with them to procure sufficient supply to meet demand.
- **Capacity.** MMR vaccinations should take precedence over influenza vaccinations in Canterbury for the next six weeks. We expect most vaccinations will take place in general practices, but are looking at potential additional options to increase capacity.
- **Funding.** MMR is a fully funded scheduled vaccine for all age groups.
- This measles outbreak is an exceptional situation and we acknowledge it will put practices under enormous pressure. We thank you for your support in anticipation.

Kind regards,

Drs Phil Schroeder and Kim Burgess  
Canterbury Primary Response Group