

MEASLES ALERT

Recommendations and information for NSW Community Pharmacists

Please distribute this information to all staff



Health

H19/128883

1. There is a measles crisis in Samoa, Tonga, New Zealand and Fiji.
2. Cases of measles have been reported in people returning or travelling from these countries.
3. Encourage anyone planning overseas travel to check their measles vaccination status.
4. Authorised pharmacists should offer MMR vaccine to travellers born after 1966 who have not had two doses of a measles-containing vaccine.
5. Advise returning travellers with fever, and anyone with fever and a maculopapular rash to seek medical advice, but to call ahead so that they can be isolated on arrival.

Measles

- Measles is highly contagious and is spread in the air through coughing or sneezing.
- Symptoms of measles include fever, sore eyes and a cough followed three or four days later by a red, blotchy rash spreading from the head and neck to the body.
- People with measles symptoms should **self-isolate** and **seek medical review** without exposing other people.

Measles outbreaks in the region

- As of 27 November, there have been 55 measles cases notified in NSW in 2019, compared to just 19 cases last year.
- Most cases are in adults aged 20-44 years, including some who were previously vaccinated.
- Recent cases have been diagnosed following travel to the Pacific Islands, where large outbreaks are occurring.
- People planning travel to these countries with infants should be advised to discuss their travel plans with their GP, as the MMR schedule can be adjusted for infants travelling to high risk areas.
- Many cases have spent time in highly populated locations while infectious, including hospitals, GP practices, community pharmacies, shopping centres, and on public transport.
- Maintaining high rates of measles immunisation in the community reduces the risk of measles being imported into Australia by returning travellers and, through herd immunity, reduces the spread of the virus locally if it is introduced.

Measles Vaccination

- Measles-mumps-rubella vaccine (MMR) is safe and available free from GPs in NSW for those born during or after 1966 who have not previously had two documented doses.
- Pharmacists authorised to administer measles containing vaccine may vaccinate individuals born after 1966 aged 16 years and over, who have not previously received two doses.
- If people are unsure if they have received two doses, it's safe to have another dose unless contraindicated.
- Measles vaccine is contraindicated in those with a history of anaphylaxis to the vaccine or any of its components, pregnant women, and people with significant immunosuppression due to a medical condition or immunosuppressive therapy.
- Ensure any vaccines administered are recorded in the Australian Immunisation Register.
- **Promotional resources** including measles travel posters, and posters and brochures alerting people to the Pacific outbreaks are available in English, Tongan, and Samoan are available from: www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/measles/Pages/resources.aspx

Further Information:

- Australian Immunisation Handbook: <https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au/>
- NSW Health Measles website: www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/measles
- Contact your local public health unit on **1300 066 055**.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Selvey'.

Dr Christine Selvey

A/ Director, Communicable Disease Branch 28 November 2019