

# Are you up to date with your immunisations?

## Frequently asked questions



Immunisation can help protect you against serious diseases such as measles, whooping cough and most cancers caused by HPV. It's important to check you are up to date with your immunisations, especially if you're leaving home for the first time, thinking of starting a family, beginning a career or travelling overseas.

Catching up on your immunisations is easy, and often free from your general practice. Talk to your practice nurse or doctor to find out if you're eligible.

### **How do I find out what immunisations I need?**

To find out what immunisations you've had already, you can ask your parents or check your Well Child/ Tamariki Ora Health Book ('Plunket Book'). Your general practice will also have records of immunisations you have received at that practice, and any records that have been transferred from previous practices.

People born from 2005 onwards have their immunisations recorded on the National Immunisation Register (NIR). People born before 2005 may have some immunisations given since 2005 (for example, immunisations given at school) recorded on the NIR.

Your practice nurse or doctor will be able to tell you what catch-up immunisations you need.

### **I think I had at least one MMR shot but I'm not sure. What should I do?**

If you're not sure, it's safer to get the MMR vaccine again to protect yourself against measles, mumps and rubella. You'll need two doses in total, at least a month apart. There's no additional risk of having a third dose if you're not sure whether you've already had two doses.

### **Still not sure if you've been immunised?**

Then the Ministry of Health recommends that you get immunised again to be sure you're protected. It's safe to have an extra dose.

### **Which catch-up immunisations are free?**

If you're aged 17 or under, the recommended childhood immunisations to protect against tetanus, diphtheria, whooping cough (pertussis), hepatitis B, polio, measles, mumps and rubella are available free.

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your best protection

If you're aged 18 years or over, you can still get free immunisation against measles, mumps and rubella. The vaccine is free for everyone born from 1 January 1969 onwards who hasn't already had two recorded doses.

HPV immunisation is free for anyone, male or female, aged 9 to 26 years inclusive.

If you have never been immunised against tetanus, diphtheria or polio, these vaccines are also free.

Adults at particular risk of disease may be eligible for funded haemophilus influenzae type B (Hib) or pneumococcal vaccine.

### How effective is the MMR vaccine?

Two doses of MMR vaccine will protect more than 95 percent of people from measles and rubella, and around 85 percent of people from mumps. Protection against measles and rubella is long lasting but immunity to mumps can lessen over time. A small number of people who are immunised may still become ill. If that happens, they usually get a milder illness than people who have not been immunised.

### What does HPV Immunisation protect against?

HPV immunisation protects against infection from the most common types of HPV that cause most cervical, anal and genital cancers, as well as some mouth and throat cancers. Immunisation with the Gardasil 9 vaccine can prevent infection against the:

- seven HPV types that cause nine out of ten HPV-related cancers
- two HPV types that cause nine out of ten cases of genital warts.

Young adults aged 15 and over will need three doses of the vaccine to be fully protected.

### Is it worth getting immunised against HPV if I'm already sexually active?

If you're already having sex, you should still consider having the HPV immunisation. It can protect you against any of the nine HPV types you may not have already been exposed to. Condoms may not stop the risk of all HPV infection because the virus can be contracted through any skin-to-skin contact.

The HPV immunisation will not protect you from other sexually transmitted infections or prevent pregnancy. Using condoms helps prevent the spread of sexually transmitted infections. Women who have had the HPV immunisation still need to have regular cervical smears.

### What extra protection is available?

There are extra immunisations that aren't usually free but are worth considering to make sure you're protected against serious diseases. Some of these are free for those at higher risk of the disease. Talk to your doctor about whether protection from these diseases is a good idea for you:

- Influenza
- Meningococcal disease
- Chickenpox (varicella)
- Hepatitis A
- Hepatitis B

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For more information about the recommended catch-up immunisations, visit:  
<https://www.health.govt.nz/fomo>

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