

## Media Release

August 29, 2019

### **Fourth confirmed Measles case in Taranaki a serious concern for DHB**

Taranaki DHB has serious concerns about the rising number of measles cases in Taranaki following confirmation of the fourth in the region; a 29 year old unvaccinated New Plymouth man.

Dr Jonathan Jarman, Taranaki DHB Medical Officer of Health said, “All four cases of people with measles in Taranaki were not vaccinated. Three of those people contracted the measles after having spent time in Auckland. Two of those cases have been so severe that hospital care was needed.

“Unfortunately we are getting cases from the large outbreak in Auckland and this is likely to continue.”

Dr Jarman said that he wished to thank all the parents who were making sure their children were vaccinated as it stopped the disease from spreading in Taranaki.

“At this stage we don’t have an outbreak here in Taranaki. What we have is the disease coming into the province from another outbreak,” Dr Jarman adds.

The Ministry of Health is advising people travelling to Auckland, particularly South Auckland, that they should be immunised against measles before they travel and that any babies who are travelling to Auckland should have their first measles vaccine at 12 months of age (rather than 15 months). Vaccination should be carried out at least two weeks before travelling to allow their immunity to develop.

“Measles is highly infectious and spreads very easily through unvaccinated people. When you vaccinate your child, you’re also protecting the people around you, including those who can’t be vaccinated and those who have compromised immunity (e.g. people receiving cancer treatment),” says Dr Jarman.

Dr Jarman says the Taranaki community needs to achieve public protection or “herd immunity”. This means immunisation coverage of 95 percent is needed to help shield the population from serious diseases, like measles.

“Vaccination is highly effective and provides immunity for 95 percent of people after one injection and for 99 percent of people after two,” he explains.

Measles is a severe illness where normally one in ten people need to be hospitalised.

“Disease is more severe in people aged over 20 years and this could explain why two out of the three cases in Taranaki required admission to hospital.”

Dr Jarman says, “Measles is highly contagious as it is an airborne disease so if you or anyone you know develops symptoms of measles, please stay at home and call Healthline (0800 611 116) or your doctor to alert them of the illness. Going to these places without speaking to staff over the phone first could put a lot of other people at risk and spread the disease further.

“It is important to give your doctor advance warning before turning up with measles to prevent infecting others in the waiting room.”



The Taranaki Public Health Unit are currently following up with people who are known to have been in contact with the most recent Taranaki case, but Dr Jarman says people who are fully vaccinated have nothing to fear from measles.

For more information about measles visit [www.tdhb.org.nz](http://www.tdhb.org.nz)

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