

Winter Wellness

Staying well in cooler weather

Cooler weather means more people are likely to get sick with colds, flu, and other respiratory illnesses, such as whooping cough. This increases the risk of these illnesses being brought into your home, workplace, Early Childhood Centre, kōhanga or kura/school.

Use the following messages and actions now to prepare. We recommend sharing this information with staff, whānau and communities by email, social media or notice boards.

Messages for staff and whānau



Anyone working or living with tamariki should get a flu vaccine to protect them and tamariki against infection as tamariki are at a higher risk of catching the flu and of passing it on to others.



Whooping cough vaccines are free for pregnant women, all children under 18 years old and adults from 45 and 65 years. If you are not eligible for a free whooping cough vaccine, they can be purchased.



Prevent the spread of illness in your centre



Remind everyone that sick tamariki or staff should stay at home.



Ask whānau to let you know the reason for their tamariki being absent.



Regular cleaning of high touch surfaces e.g. door handles, counter tops, bathroom areas.



Good ventilation is an important way to reduce the transmission of respiratory viruses in indoor spaces where people gather and spend time.



Encourage people to wash hands, cover coughs and sneezes, wear a mask if indoors in crowded areas.



Vaccines to protect against illness

Increasing our immunisation coverage is the best way to protect our communities from illnesses this winter.

Check you are up-to-date with your immunisations at healthnz.govt.nz/immunisations. If you have missed a vaccination, it's okay. It's free for tamariki to catch up on most vaccinations, and adults can catch up on lots too. Talk to your healthcare provider to make a plan.

You can also create a free, personalised routine immunisation schedule for your child at: healthnz.govt.nz/health-topics/immunisations/national-immunisation-schedule

Influenza: The flu vaccine is available from 1 April every year. It is free for people who are pregnant, over 65 years old, and people at higher risk of getting very sick. Check with you are eligible at: healthnz.govt.nz/flu-vaccine

Whooping cough: Whooping cough (pertussis) is a highly contagious respiratory disease that is particularly dangerous for babies who have not been fully immunised. Immunisation during pregnancy is the best way to protect the baby until they can start their own immunisations at 6 weeks of age. Aotearoa is experiencing a whooping cough epidemic, so now is a good time to get vaccinated.

Measles: New Zealand is at very high risk of a measles outbreak, due to our low immunisation rates and ongoing measles outbreaks overseas. If you are unsure if you are fully immunised it's free for most people to catch up, just contact your usual healthcare provider. Lots of pharmacies also now offer immunisations too.

For more information visit: healthnz.govt.nz/health-topics/immunisations



Influenza (flu)

It is recommended that everyone over 6 months of age gets an annual flu vaccine.



Bexsero (Meningococcal)

Pēpē and tamariki should get their vaccine doses at 3 months, 5 months and 12 months.



Measles

All tamariki need two doses of MMR at 12 and 15 months. If you're not sure if your tamariki has had theirs just ask your usual healthcare provider.



Whooping cough

Pēpē and tamariki should get their vaccine doses at 6 weeks, 3 months, and 5 months. Booster doses are offered at 4 and 11 years old.



Meningococcal

The meningococcal B (MenB) vaccine is offered at 3 months, 5 months, and 12 months old. Under 5s can also get the MenB vaccine for free.



Preventing house fires



Winter is a higher-risk time for house fires. Over the last 10 years, there have been approximately 54 percent more house fires between

May and July than during the rest of the year.

Many of these fires are linked to heating being used more often in winter – for example, heaters placed too close to things that can burn (like clothes being dried), or simply faulty electric blankets.

In addition, more than 50 percent of avoidable house fire deaths are people over 65. So, this winter, here are a few very simple steps you can take to keep yourself and your loved ones safe.

Just remember to:

- **Follow the “metre from the heater” rule** – keep at least one metre of clear space around heaters and other heat sources.
- **Check the heat before you sleep** – check your electric blanket for hot spots before first use.
- **Chimney alright before first light?** – get your chimney cleaned before the first fire of the season.
- **Cool ash before you stash** – soak with water in a metal bucket.
- **A clean dryer avoids fire** – remove lint before every use.

It is also important that people have working smoke alarms in every bedroom, living room and hallway. This will give you the earliest possible warning to escape.



Visiting an after hours or urgent care clinic

When you need urgent medical help, and your usual doctor isn't available or you don't have one, After Hours Medical Centres and Urgent Care Clinics can help you. You don't need an appointment, but you might have to wait. For tamariki under 14 years old, services are usually free. Many have lower fees for community service card holders. You can find where centres are located, and their charges, on the [Healthpoint](#) website.

In an emergency, always call 111.

Need more help?

You can call Healthline for free, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week on 0800 611 116. Talk to your General Practitioner (GP), pharmacist, hauora Māori provider, or Pacific health clinic.