

The decision to delay or decline immunisation is an important decision, one that needs to be considered carefully.

**Without immunisation** your child is at greater risk of catching one of the vaccine-preventable diseases. Children today can and do become seriously ill and die from these diseases, even healthy children.

Unimmunised children can become infected and spread the diseases to others, especially babies who are too young to be immunised and people who are unable to be immunised because of medical reasons.

**Be aware** that for some diseases, one case of the disease is enough to cause concern in a community; an example is measles, one of the most contagious diseases. This disease spreads quickly among people who are not immune.

Unimmunised children will be excluded from their early childhood centres, Kōhanga Reo, school, sports event or other organised activities during disease outbreaks. Be prepared to keep your child home for several days and possibly up to several weeks.

Any of the vaccine-preventable diseases can return to New Zealand at any time because these diseases are still circulating somewhere in the world.

**If you know your unimmunised child has been in contact with an infected person or is injured, remember** to seek medical advice as soon as possible. Know the signs and symptoms of the disease.

Tell the medical centre your child is unimmunised and been in contact with the disease before attending so that staff can treat your child correctly as quickly as possible.

If an unimmunised child/individual is injured and the wound is classified as 'dirty' they will be offered tetanus immunoglobulin (a blood product), this may only offer some protection temporarily.

## What to expect

If immunisation has been declined previously, the medical practice may contact you again regarding immunisation:

- if there is an outbreak of a specific vaccine-preventable disease in the area,
- when the next scheduled immunisation visit is due, or
- when a vaccine is added to the funded Immunisation Schedule.

This is to offer you an opportunity to ask questions and to ensure that you are aware of potential risks in your community.

## Decisions later in life

- Many immunisations are free up until the 18th birthday.
- Rubella immunisation is free to all women of childbearing age in the form of the MMR vaccine.
- All early childhood centres, Kōhanga Reo and schools have a legal responsibility to record every child's immunisation status.
- Some occupations require proof of certain immunisations; employers may not pay for immunisation.
- Proof of certain immunisations is required to enter some countries, even for short visits such as sporting trips.

## Remember...

You can change your mind and catch up immunisations at any time

If you have any questions or need more information,  
please contact your General Practice team or Well Child provider,  
telephone 0800 IMMUNE (0800 466 863) or visit [www.immune.org.nz](http://www.immune.org.nz)

**We strongly encourage you to immunise your child and yourself**