

Measles case on Pacific Blue Flight - Passengers warned **(The following media release was sent by the CDHB 08/02/11)**

The Community and Public Health Division of Canterbury District Health Board is warning travellers who arrived in Christchurch on Monday, January 31, on a Pacific Blue flight from Melbourne may have been exposed to measles.

Canterbury Medical Officer of Health Dr Alistair Humphrey says Community and Public Health has been notified of an infected passenger who arrived on Pacific Blue Flight DJ 60, which departed Melbourne and arrived in Christchurch at 3pm last Monday.

Passengers on that flight who were seated in rows 25 to 29 should contact Community and Public Health on 03 379 9480. All other passengers are not at risk.

“Measles is a serious illness with 10 per cent of people who have the disease requiring hospital treatment. Measles is at its most highly infectious stage before any symptoms of a rash appears,” Dr Humphrey says.

“The infected passenger was travelling to Christchurch for a wedding and would have been travelling during this highly infectious period.”

Passengers on the flight would now be experiencing symptoms, he says.

“Measles is easily spread through the air and people sitting in a row close to an affected passenger are potentially at risk. Even people sitting further away could have been infected, for example, while walking past the passengers with measles, or while waiting in the airport gate lounge.”

While measles is now rare in New Zealand, thanks to vaccination, Dr Humphrey says there were still three outbreaks in 2009/2010, each of which was started by people who were infected overseas.

“People tend to underestimate measles – reality is it can be a nasty disease. Measles can’t be treated once you get it, so the only way to prevent the disease is through immunisation.”

Any passenger from Pacific Blue Flight DJ 60 who feels unwell should telephone their General Practice or call Healthline on 0800 611-116 for advice.

“It is important to call first because measles is highly infectious and people with measles can infect others in the waiting room,” Dr Humphrey says.

Typical symptoms of measles are:

- The first symptoms are a fever, runny nose and sore red eyes.
- Then after a few days a red blotchy rash comes on and lasts up to one week. It usually starts on the face and spreads to the rest of the body.
- Children and adults with measles are often very sick.

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