

Waikato Public Health Bulletin

Public Health Waikato

Whiringa-ā-nuku/ Whiringa-ā-rangi 2025 | October/November 2025

Tēnā koutou katoa. We hope you enjoy this edition of the Waikato Public Health Bulletin and we welcome your feedback. The bulletin is written for GPs and colleagues in primary & community care.

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Measles Notification Processes

Aotearoa New Zealand is at risk of a large outbreak of measles. Population immunity is well below the 95% required to prevent outbreaks. To clarify the process for a case of suspected measles, we have detailed the steps for notifying a suspected case of measles.

Notify immediately on suspicion to public health via electronic referral (where available) **AND call** to notify the local on-call Medical Officer of Health. Measles notifications overnight (between the hours of 10pm and 8am) can wait until the morning to call the on-call Medical Officer of Health.

Please give a detailed history of:

- Presenting symptoms (including fever, rash, Koplik's spots, conjunctivitis, coryzal symptoms).
- Patient's name, phone number, NHI, and date of birth.
- Location(s) of potential exposure.
- Contact (face-to-face or spent time in a confined indoor space) with a case (and the name of the confirmed measles case, if known).
- Immunity status/vaccination history of the patient and their whaanau/close contacts.

The preferred swab for a measles PCR is a nasopharyngeal viral swab. Do not test for serology. Ensure swabs sent to the lab are marked as **urgent**. Do not send suspected measles cases to community labs for swabbing. If suspected cases require transfer to hospital, **phone ahead** so that appropriate IPC measures can be put in place.

If Early Childhood Centres (ECEs) have suspected or confirmed notifiable disease(s) (including measles) please call the public health service **BEFORE** sending out communications to parents/whaanau/caregivers.

Spotlight on Dengue

Dengue is a viral infection with mosquito to human transmission. Mosquito species normally responsible for its spread are not present in New Zealand. However, there are currently dengue outbreaks in a number of Pacific countries: American Samoa, Cook Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, Samoa and Tuvalu.



Photo: Aedes aegypti, a mosquito that can spread dengue. Thankfully not present in Aotearoa NZ!

Patients infected with dengue commonly present with a relevant travel history, fever, vomiting, rash, pain (headache, retro-orbital pain, arthralgia, myalgia). Risk factors for progression to more severe disease includes previous dengue infection, infants, elderly, multiple co-morbidities, and pregnancy.

The Medical Officer of Health should be notified on suspicion of dengue. Please include symptoms, onset date, travel history and whether the case was hospitalised.

Blood samples should be taken as soon as possible for FBC, LFTs, dengue serology (including NS1Ag), and/or an arbovirus PCR panel if other mosquito-borne viruses are part of the differential (e.g. Chikungunya or Zika). If there is uncertainty around which investigations to order, consider consulting PHF science or LabPlus at Auckland City Hospital.

Dengue vaccines are not currently available in New Zealand. Prior to travel to countries with endemic dengue, patients should be counselled on preventative measures. It is recommended to wear clothing that minimises exposed skin and to use insect repellent, mosquito nets, and mosquito coils where possible.

More information on dengue is available on [HealthPathways](#) and the [Communicable Disease Control manual](#).

Asbestos in sand products

A national recall of some coloured sand products in Aotearoa New Zealand has been announced due to contamination with asbestos. The identified sand products (typically used for children play activities) are:

- EC Rainbow Sand (1.3kg)
- Creatistics Coloured Sand (1kg)
- 14-piece Sandcastle Building Set (Batch no: 42975724)
- Blue Magic Sand (Batch no: 42304364)
- Green Magic Sand (Batch no: 432919650)
- Pink Magic Sand (Batch no: 42304371)

Exposure to asbestos does not cause any immediate health problems and there is no need for urgent medical attention. Based on currently available information, there is a low risk to health. However, parents and caregivers may have concerns regarding risks to their children.

Please refer to online [Te Whatu Ora guidance on asbestos in sand](#) products. This has guidance on immediate steps, cleanup and disposal and advice to members of the public.

Key advice includes:

- Reduce or stop smoking, as tobacco smoke increases risk after asbestos exposure.
- Education facilities and workplaces need to follow removal advice provided by WorkSafe.
- Wear appropriate PPE (including gloves and a P2/N95 mask over the nose and mouth).
- Wear disposable gloves while cleaning up or handling potentially contaminated material.
- Asbestos-contaminated material must be disposed of at an appropriate landfill site and should **not** be placed with household rubbish.
- If households have a large quantity of asbestos-contaminated material that may need professional help to remove, contact the MBIE Consumer line [0508 426 678](#) for further advice.

Staff News

Tui Shadbolt has received her designation as a Health Protection Officer. We congratulate Tui and acknowledge her hard work and contributions in her health protection mahi over the years!

Dr Daham Nanayakkara has completed his PGY2 House Officer rotation at the Public Health Service and has moved back to the hospital for the next quarter. Daham has been an excellent member of the clinical team, contributing well in all areas and particularly in the Hepatitis C space. We wish Daham all the best for the rest of his career!

Dr Elliott Jia has begun his PGY2 House Officer public health rotation. Elliott has already been a brilliant help at NPHS Waikato, particularly helping with communicable disease notifications and follow-up and contributing to this bulletin. The team greatly appreciates Elliott's consistently excellent mahi!

Dr Liz Becker has resigned from her role as Medical Officer of Health, moving onto a role as Public Health Medicine Specialist for the Health Gain Development Team, Planning Funding and Outcomes (Te Manawa Taki). Liz's mahi has been outstanding since she joined NPHS Waikato as a non-training registrar, a training registrar and a Medical Officer of Health. She has provided expertise in the regional approach to screening, was a significant contributor to the incredibly successful COVID response in the region and has strived for equity in all her work. Liz is an absolute pleasure to work with and her presence in the office will be missed!

Dr Richard Vipond (RV) will also change roles from Medical Officer of Health to work with the National Protection Team with the National Public Health Service. Across the years, RV has shown excellence in as a Medical Officer of Health, including as Clinical Director during the COVID pandemic response and his senior advisory, teaching, and supervisory roles. RV's hard work, emphasis on manaaki and penchant for humour have left their mark and we wish him all the best in his new role!

Dr Kate Meerkerk has returned from parental leave and resumed her role as Medical Officer of Health. Kate's mahi and presence at NPHS Waikato has been greatly missed and we are excited to have her back! She has picked up her portfolios of: enterics/gastroenteritis, Hepatitis A and E, typhoid/paratyphoid, iGAS, invasive pneumococcal disease, respiratory outbreaks and lead poisoning.

Medical Officers of Health (MOoH)

Dr Felicity Dumble, Dr Kate Meerkerk, Dr Richard Wall, Dr Kaitlin Greenway, Dr Geoff Cramp.

After Hours:

MOoH: 021 359 650 **HPO:** 021 999 521

If there is no answer, please contact Waikato Hospital's switchboard 07 839 8899 and ask for the on-call MOoH.

During Office Hours:

Public Health (MOoH or HPO): (07) 838 2569 Notifications: 07 838 2569 ext. 22041 or 22020

Notifications outside Hamilton: 0800 800 977 Fax: 07 838 2382

Email: WK-Nphsnotifiablediseases@TeWhatuora.govt.nz

Please call the public health unit **before** sending off swabs for notifiable diseases so that public health can obtain a history prior to receiving a lab notification. If notifying via BPAC, please fill out **all** fields on the form (in particular for pertussis, whether anyone in the household is pregnant or age under 1 year old).

Notifiable Diseases – Trends

Notifiable diseases (Waikato District) - period to:

October 2025

*Stats NZ estimated 8.69% of the population resided in Waikato in 2021

Disease name	Waikato cases per month			Cases per month over the last year (mean)		
	August	September	Trend	Waikato	National	% Waikato*
Botulism	0	0	-	0.0	0.0	-
Brucellosis	0	0	-	0.0	0.1	0
Campylobacteriosis	55	59	▲	54.5	501.6	11
COVID-19	179	113	▼	267.3	3,486.8	8
Cryptosporidiosis	40	42	▲	11.3	71.8	16
Decompression sickness	0	0	-	0.0	0.2	0
Dengue fever	5	3	▼	2.1	30.3	7
Diphtheria	0	0	-	0.0	0.3	0
Gastroenteritis - unknown cause	1	2	▲	2.3	19.3	12
Gastroenteritis / foodborne intoxication	7	9	▲	6.9	21.3	32
Giardiasis	8	9	▲	9.3	71.0	13
Haemophilus influenzae type b	0	0	-	0.0	0.2	0
Hepatitis A	0	0	-	1.2	6.2	19
Hepatitis B	1	0	▼	0.1	1.3	8
Hepatitis C	0	3	▲	0.6	2.8	21
Hepatitis NOS	0	0	-	0.1	0.6	17
Hydatid disease	0	0	-	0.0	0.3	0
Invasive pneumococcal disease	14	4	▼	5.3	61.7	9
Latent tuberculosis infection	3	1	▼	2.2	8.0	28
Lead Poisoning	0	0	-	0.0	0.0	-
Legionellosis	2	0	▼	1.3	13.2	10
Leprosy	0	0	-	0.0	0.2	0
Leptospirosis	5	1	▼	2.1	8.4	25
Listeriosis	0	0	-	0.0	2.8	0
Listeriosis - perinatal	0	0	-	0.0	0.0	-
Malaria	0	0	-	0.2	3.1	6
Measles	0	0	-	0.0	1.5	0
Meningococcal disease	0	0	-	0.2	3.4	6
Mumps	0	0	-	0.2	1.4	14
Murine Typhus	0	0	-	0.0	0.3	0
Pertussis	9	21	▲	15.4	272.3	6
Q fever	0	0	-	0.0	0.1	0
Rheumatic fever - initial attack	0	0	-	0.0	0.0	-
Rheumatic fever - recurrent attack	0	0	-	0.0	0.0	-
Salmonellosis	5	15	▲	6.4	84.8	8
Shigellosis	0	0	-	0.6	15.0	4
Taeniasis	0	0	-	0.0	0.3	0
Tetanus	0	0	-	0.0	0.1	0
Tuberculosis disease - new case	5	1	▼	3.8	29.8	13
Tuberculosis disease - relapse or reactivation	0	0	-	0.2	0.9	22
Tuberculosis infection - on preventive treatment	0	0	-	0.1	0.2	50
Typhoid fever	0	1	▲	0.8	4.4	18
VTEC/STEC infection	12	11	▼	14.4	98.4	15
Yersiniosis	3	5	▲	6.5	96.3	7