

A timeline of epidemics in New Zealand, 1817–2020

1817–20	Influenza reported among Māori on coasts of Foveaux Strait
1835	Measles reported among Māori in South Island whaling stations
1838–39	‘Rewha-rewha’ (probably influenza) in Bay of Islands and Mercury Bay
1852–53	Influenza widespread
1858	Measles prevalent
1863–64	Scarlet fever in Dunedin: 119 deaths
1872–75	Diphtheria prevalent in Christchurch
1872	Smallpox outbreak in Auckland from SS <i>Nebraska</i> : 7 cases, 3 deaths
1873	Pertussis (whooping cough): 356 deaths across New Zealand
1874	Typhoid at Cromwell: 110 cases, 20 deaths
1874–75	Measles: 344 deaths across New Zealand Diphtheria: 481 deaths across New Zealand
1875	Typhoid widespread in towns and cities: 323 deaths (worst year) Tuberculosis: 339 deaths across New Zealand
1876–98	Typhoid deaths average 143 annually across New Zealand
1876–77	Scarlet fever deaths: 834 across New Zealand
1881–82	Measles widespread in Otago and Canterbury: 199 deaths across New Zealand Scarlet fever: 257 deaths across New Zealand Diphtheria in Christchurch: 132 cases, 27 deaths; 216 deaths across New Zealand
1883–84	Typhoid outbreak in Northland Pertussis widespread: 24 deaths in Auckland, 246 deaths across New Zealand
1887	Measles in Whanganui
1888	Typhoid in Auckland Diphtheria: 219 deaths across New Zealand
1890–94	Influenza pandemic: 1,393 deaths registered
1890	Typhoid in Nelson: 48 cases, 5 deaths
1891	Pertussis in Wellington: 24 deaths, 242 deaths across New Zealand

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1892	Diphtheria prevalent: 281 deaths across New Zealand (worst year)
1893	Measles in Auckland: 511 deaths across New Zealand Typhoid in Wellington: 400 cases, 35 deaths
1897–98	Measles outbreak among East Cape Māori
1898–99	Influenza prevalent: 219 deaths across New Zealand; suspected rubella epidemic
1900–11	Plague in Auckland: 9 deaths
1902–3	Scarlet fever: 209 deaths across New Zealand Measles: 277 deaths across New Zealand
1907	Pertussis: 307 deaths across New Zealand (last major outbreak)
1911	Typhoid prevalent in Māori districts
1913	Smallpox in Northland: 2,000 cases, 55 deaths (last major outbreak in New Zealand)
1916	Polio: 123 deaths across New Zealand, many in military camps
1917	Diphtheria: 240 deaths across New Zealand
1918	Influenza pandemic: at least 500,000 cases, nearly 9,000 deaths across New Zealand. European death rate 5.8 per 1,000; Māori death rate nearly 50 per 1,000
1920–21	Measles prevalent
1921–22	Meningitis prevalent
1925	Polio: 175 deaths across New Zealand
1929	Influenza prevalent: 297 deaths across New Zealand
1929–30	Diphtheria prevalent: 150 deaths across New Zealand
1936–37	Typhoid in Māori districts
1937	Polio: 39 deaths
1938	Measles: 163 European deaths, 212 Māori
1939	Suspected rubella epidemic
1941–42	Diphtheria prevalent Pertussis: 72 deaths across New Zealand
1944–45	Scarlet fever: 40 deaths across New Zealand

1947	Typhoid outbreak at Kaikōura: 78 cases, 3 deaths
1948–49	Polio: 65 deaths across New Zealand
1952–53	Polio: 80 deaths
1955–56	Polio: 79 deaths (last major epidemic)
1959	Tuberculosis cases among Europeans, 4.1 per 10,000; among Māori, 31 per 10,000
1964–65	Rubella epidemic
1971	Hepatitis A: 4,500 cases notified
1972	Measles prevalent
1977–80	Hepatitis A: 1,500 cases notified annually (then declined)
1983–98	HIV/AIDS epidemic: 1,336 cases
1985–86	Measles and meningitis prevalent in Auckland
1986	Peak of HIV/AIDS epidemic: 125 cases
1991–2007	Meningococcal B epidemic: 5,244 cases, 252 deaths
1995	Rubella epidemic: 1,600 confirmed cases
1996	Influenza prevalent: 90 deaths
1997	Measles epidemic: 2,000 cases notified, 200 hospitalised
1997–2008	Campylobacteriosis epidemic
1999	Influenza prevalent: over 500 hospitalised
1999–2001	Pertussis epidemic: 6,523 cases notified
2001	Peak of meningococcal group B epidemic: 648 confirmed cases
2003	Influenza prevalent: 600 hospitalised
2004–5	Pertussis epidemic: 3,489 cases notified, 159 hospitalised
2009	H1N1 ‘swine flu’ pandemic: 3,150 confirmed cases, 20 deaths
2020	COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) pandemic