

Latest COVID-19 health key messages

Approved messages for use in your communications

Consistent messaging helps us to coordinate our efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This document provides approved key messages from the Ministry. You may share this messaging with your internal and external audiences. New sections and changes to messages are in **red**.

26 March 2021, FINAL

All of New Zealand is at Alert Level 1.

To keep New Zealand COVID-free, we need to keep reinforcing public health behaviours.

Messages can include:

Throughout all Alert levels, everyone must continue to do their bit to keep New Zealand COVID free.

- **Stay home** if you're unwell and **get tested**.
- **Wear a mask or face covering** on all flights and public transport, including on long-distance bus and train journeys and on most ferries.
- **Keep track of where you've been** - scan QR codes using the NZ COVID Tracer app and enable Bluetooth tracing on your device. Check that you have Bluetooth tracing enabled on the dashboard of the NZ COVID Tracer app. If you don't, turn it on now. If you aren't able to use the app, download or request a COVID Tracer booklet, keep a calendar or diary.
- **Practice** good hygiene (includes washing your hands often and coughing into your elbow)
- **Regularly clean** high touch **surfaces**.

Staying at home and self-isolation, managed isolation/quarantine guidance

- Guidance has been clarified and updated on the Ministry's website regarding staying at home and self-isolation/ managed isolation/quarantine.
- It is important that people are clearly able to differentiate what the instructions are and what is expected of them.
- Details are covered on two webpages, **COVID-19: Staying at home** and **COVID-19: Self-isolation, managed isolation/quarantine**.

Current Situation

- The investigation into how a cleaner at the Grand Millennium, referred to as Case A, was exposed to COVID-19 is continuing. Case A and a household member whose result is under investigation remain at the Auckland quarantine facility.
- The household member has returned a second negative test at Day 5.
- This person continues to be managed as a close contact and is not considered to be a confirmed case at this stage.
- All close and casual contacts of Case A have returned negative initial tests. They are due to have their Day 5 tests today and tomorrow. Results of those will come in over the weekend.
- Any further information will be updated on the Ministry of Health website as it becomes available.

COVID-19 Vaccine

Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine

- The Government is buying an extra 8.5 million doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine. This means there will be enough doses (10 million) to vaccinate New Zealand's entire population.
- The extra doses will be enough to vaccinate up to 4.25m people and are expected to arrive here during the second half of the year.
- The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is the only COVID-19 vaccine that has gained approval from Medsafe for use here in New Zealand. Early clinical data indicates this vaccine is about 95 percent effective at preventing symptomatic infection, so is an important tool in our fight against COVID-19.
- On 23 March, our sixth batch of 71,370 vaccines arrived in Auckland, bringing the country's total number of COVID-19 vaccines landed to date to around 396,630 – enough to vaccinate more than 198,000 people with the two doses required for maximum protection.
- By the end of March, we're due to receive a total of about 450,000 doses – enough to vaccinate 225,000 people with a two-dose course.

Rollout Sequencing

On Wednesday 10 March, a targeted rollout of the vaccine was announced for the next three to four months.

- This will reach two million New Zealanders who are most at risk of getting and spreading COVID-19, and those most at risk of getting very sick from the virus.
- The plan prioritises reducing the chance of future outbreaks while protecting our elders, those with underlying health conditions and disabilities, and those who live in locations where community cases have occurred.
- There will be a range of options to make it as easy as possible for people to get vaccinated.
- Workers and residents of long-term residential care environments will get the vaccine at or near their workplace/facility.
- The vaccine will be available through Māori and Pacific providers, pop-up centres, GPs, medical and hauora centres, community clinics and larger scale venues.
- An online tool that helps people find out when they can get the vaccine [can be found here](https://covid19.govt.nz/health-and-wellbeing/covid-19-vaccines/getting-a-covid-19-vaccine/find-out-when-you-can-get-a-vaccine/) <https://covid19.govt.nz/health-and-wellbeing/covid-19-vaccines/getting-a-covid-19-vaccine/find-out-when-you-can-get-a-vaccine/>. It describes the four groups and will take people through a series of questions to work out when they can get the vaccine.

Rollout sequencing: COVID-19 vaccination groups

There are four main groups. Be aware that timings will overlap, and start dates are indicative only and depend on vaccine delivery schedules, and our transmission scenarios.

Group 1

50,000 border and MIQ workers, their household contacts and the people they live with. This started in February 2021.

Group 2

Approximately 480,000 frontline workers and people living in high-risk settings. Starting with the 57,000

healthcare workers on community frontlines, and then moving through to healthcare workers protecting our most vulnerable and some priority populations. This started in February 2021 and will continue through to May 2021.

Anyone who lives in the Counties Manukau DHB area who is 65 and older or who has an underlying health condition is also in Group 2.

Group 3

Priority populations. Approximately 1.7 million people who are at higher risk if they catch COVID-19. This is planned to start in May 2021.

Group 4

The remainder of the general population – approximately 2 million people. Starting from the middle of the year.

Other groups TBC

There are two categories which are still being finalised: one for people who may need to get a vaccine on compassionate grounds; and a national significance category, which could include groups who need a vaccine in order to represent New Zealand overseas.

COVID-19 vaccine messaging

- The COVID-19 vaccine programme is the biggest single logistical exercise our health system has ever tackled. The Ministry of Health is leading the COVID-19 immunisation programme and is working closely with district health boards.
- There will be enough vaccine for the entire population to be vaccinated and **no one will miss out.**
- The vaccine is free.
- Although we know the vaccine protects individuals from the effects of the virus, international researchers haven't yet been able to determine whether a vaccinated person could still be a carrier and transmit COVID-19 to someone else. For this reason, mandatory testing of our border and MIQ workforce will continue as well as the use of PPE in the workplace.

COVID-19 vaccine roll-out to date

- The first phase of our immunisation programme started on Saturday 20 February, with border and MIQ workers, who are covered by the current Required Testing Order (2020), along with those they live with.
- There are 50,000 border/MIQ workers and household contacts. Collectively, an estimated 70-75 percent of New Zealand's border and MIQ workers are in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch.
- **As at 24 March, about 95 percent of border staff had agreed and had their first COVID-19 vaccination. Out of a total of 16,500 people, that's 15,606 people so far.**
- **Also, as at 24 March, we'd vaccinated 5,735 of the estimated 50,000 families and household contacts of the border and MIQ in our main centres against COVID-19.**
- **In total, as at 24 March, 41, 477 doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine have been administered in New Zealand.**
 - **First dose administered: 35,700**
 - **Second dose administered: 5,777.**

Early access to vaccine for international travel

- It was announced on Wednesday 24 March that people who need to travel outside of New Zealand will be able to apply for an early COVID-19 vaccination on compassionate grounds or for reasons of national significance.
- People will need to meet a series of strict criteria, including being a New Zealand citizen, resident or visa holder; needing to travel before 31 August 2021; and having already made arrangements for returning to New Zealand.
- They also need to ensure they will be able to receive both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, at least three weeks apart, prior to their departure.
- The compassionate grounds that would be considered for travel overseas include:
 - needing to provide critical care and protection for a dependant (for example your child);
 - accessing critical medical care that is not available in New Zealand; and
 - visiting an immediate family member who is dying.

National significance overseas travel will include representing New Zealand:

- in an official capacity;
- at significant international events; and
- in an official non-government capacity.

Travel reasons do not include:

- private, recreational or commercial travel
 - reuniting with family
 - attending a funeral or memorial service
 - attending a school or university.
- Applications will be open from 31 March. We are developing an online tool for individuals to apply for compassionate grounds.
 - For reasons of national significance, the appropriate agency or association (such as MFAT, Sport NZ and the Ministry for Culture and Heritage) will apply directly to us on behalf of the individuals.

Health and safety of COVID-19 vaccine

- Medsafe only grants consent for a vaccine to be used in New Zealand once it is satisfied it's safe and effective enough to use. All COVID-19 vaccines will go through the same safety test and must meet the same robust standards.
- It is recommended that the following gaps between vaccines be observed:
 - **At least a two-week gap** between the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine and influenza vaccine
 - **A four-week gap** between the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine and the Measles Mumps Rubella vaccine.

Having a gap between the different types of vaccinations makes it easier to judge which vaccine may be responsible for any side effects.

This advice will be updated as further clinical data becomes available.

If there are specific questions about other vaccines, clinicians can use the IMMUNISATION ADVISORY CENTRE hotline on 0800 IMMUNE (0800 466 863) for advice.

- You'll need to wait 20 minutes after your COVID-19 vaccination so medical staff can check you do not have a serious allergic reaction.

- Potential side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine:
- Like all medicines, the vaccine may cause side effects in some people. These are common, are usually mild and don't last long and won't stop you from having the second dose or going about your daily life.
- The most common reported reactions are pain at the injection site, a headache and feeling tired or fatigued.
- Muscle aches, feeling generally unwell, chills, fever, joint pain and nausea may also occur.
- Some side effects may temporarily affect your ability to drive or use machinery
- Once you have waited 20 minutes after your vaccination, check with your vaccinator for any further advice before you return to your day.
- Serious allergic reactions do occur but are extremely rare. Our vaccinators are trained to manage these.
- Even though vaccinations have begun, it's important everyone stays vigilant and sticks to the basics: washing hands, coughing and sneezing into the elbow, and wearing masks or face coverings on all public transport. Please continue to use the COVID Tracer app to keep track of where you've been, scan QR codes wherever you go and turn on Bluetooth tracing in the app dashboard.

Can someone test positive for COVID-19 after being vaccinated?

- The vaccines do not contain live virus so will not cause people to return positive PCR tests as a result of the vaccine
- A positive PCR test from someone who is vaccinated is high likely to be a true positive result. Confirmatory tests would be performed as required
- Some serology tests may be positive post vaccine.
- There may be a role for serology testing in vaccinated people to assess the level of protection that they have from the virus

Scams/misinformation of COVID-19 vaccine

- If you become aware of any campaigns or information targeting New Zealanders and asking for personal information or payment for receiving the COVID-19 vaccine, please report it to CERT.
- It's important to note the vaccine is free and at no point will you be asked to pay for securing your place in the queue.
- Any official communications about the vaccine will come from the Ministry of Health, the Covid19 website or your healthcare provider. If you receive any emails out of the blue asking for financial and personal details it is likely to be a scam.
- The best way you can help us stop these scams affecting New Zealanders is to report them to CERT NZ. You can do this via CERT NZ's website: www.cert.govt.nz or by calling 0800 2378 69.

Trans-Tasman travel bubble

- The Government intends to announce the commencement date for a trans-Tasman travel bubble on 6 April 2021.
- It has also been announced that certain conditions will need to be satisfied before the travel bubble can be finalised. These include, but are not limited to, our response framework (for when there are cases in Australia) is fit for purpose and ready, and also we have measures in place to effectively contact trace travellers from Australia should we need to.
- Much work has already been done but opening up a quarantine-free travel zone with Australia is highly complex.

NZ COVID Tracer app

As at 25 March 2021;

- NZ COVID Tracer now has 2,763,330 registered users.
- Poster scans have reached 230,464,258 and users have now created more than 8,738,888 manual diary entries.
- An update to the app now means another 100,000 New Zealanders with older iPhones will be able turn on the Bluetooth tracing function of the app.
- Version 4.0.0 has now been released to extend Bluetooth support to iPhone 5S, 6 and 6+.
- We've already seen solid support for the Bluetooth function – there are almost 1,190,276 participating devices – and the update overnight means more New Zealanders can enjoy an extra layer of precaution.

It's critical we continue to use the **NZ COVID Tracer app to keep track of where we've been** to improve our chances of quickly stopping the spread of COVID-19.

We encourage everyone to keep scanning and to **turn on Bluetooth tracing**.

Check that you have Bluetooth tracing enabled on the dashboard of the NZ COVID Tracer app. If you don't, please turn it on.

Scanning QR codes allow us to create a private record of the *places* we've been, while Bluetooth creates an anonymised record *of the people* we've been near. Both are important for contact tracing.

We all need to make using the app part of our daily routines because it helps contact tracing go faster when it's needed and allows people to be notified quickly if they are exposed to COVID-19. The app is one of the most effective tools in our toolkit. The more we use it, the safer we'll all be.

Further information about the app and Bluetooth tracing can be found on the Ministry of Health website at **www.health.govt.nz/nz-covid-tracer**

Tip: If you need to get a COVID-19 test, you can use the app to find your nearest testing centre. Simply open the Dashboard and tap the 'Learn more' tile. Then tap the 'Find a testing location' link to bring up Healthpoint's list of testing centres.

If you're having any problems with the app and can't find answers to your question on our website, please get in touch either by email or phone – **help@covidtracer.min.health.nz** or 0800 800 606.

If you can't use the app, use other ways to keep track of where you've been;

The **NZ COVID Tracer diary booklet** helps people who can't use the app to keep track of where they've been and who they've seen.

Booklets can be printed from the Covid19 website in English and 22 other languages

Print a NZ COVID Tracer booklet in English

Print a NZ COVID Tracer booklet in another language

Booklets can also be ordered in packs of 10. You can order copies for yourself or to distribute to your community.

Orders are free and take 2-3 weeks. Order your booklets through **<https://order.hpa.org.nz/collections/covid-19/products/covid-19-booklet>** or by emailing **covid19response@dpmc.govt.nz**.

You can also keep a diary or calendar, take photos or take notes to keep track of where you've been.

- For more information and frequently asked questions about pre-departure testing requirements, visit the **Unite against COVID-19** website **www.covid19.govt.nz**

National PPE and Critical Medical Supply Chain

Following consultation with Medsafe, Becton Dickinson (BD) initiated an Urgent Medical Device Recall relating to Dedicated Infusion Sets for BD Alaris™ Pumps (GP, VP, CC and SE, inclusive of the Nexus GP), and Non-Dedicated Infusion sets and accessories on Friday 12 March.

The global recall was made because of a third-party sterilisation problem which meant BD could not guarantee the sterilisation was to standard. BD advises there have been no reports of harm in New Zealand or worldwide and no specific follow-up activities are required if the product has already been used. Any adverse health consequences experienced from the use of this product should be reported to Medsafe as per usual processes.

BD is supplying a number of loan pumps currently in Australia and the Ministry has moved quickly to source alternative pumps and consumables from the National Reserve and to purchase other models and consumables.

To help make up the shortfall we have to date been able to source the following alternative pumps and consumables, and commenced the rollout of pumps and gravity sets as below:

- 605 Baxter pumps from the National Reserve have had the once over by our group of clinical engineers from around DHBs and have been put into some DHBs as replacements. A further 300 Baxter pumps secured by the Ministry have arrived in country and have also been distributed across DHBs.
- 300 additional Baxter pumps have been secured and these will begin to arrive in New Zealand by the end of this week.
- 495 unaffected BD Alaris pumps (of which 160 are within New Zealand) will be arriving for distribution to Auckland over the course of the next few days. These are loan pumps from Australia.
- 250 Fresenius Kabi pumps have arrived and been distributed to Counties Manukau DHB.
- A further 300 Fresenius Kabi pumps arrive in April and 300 more in May.
- 150 GH loan syringe drivers are expected today for despatch.
- We also have 166 GH syringe drivers in the National Reserve which are in the country and can be made available.
- Consumables for the new Baxter, Fresenius Kabi and BD pumps have been secured.

We're working with DHBs and the wider health sector to determine how these are best allocated and setting up a clinical advisory group to help inform this. Any queries should be directed to COVID.HealthSupplyChain@health.govt.nz

Personal Protective Equipment

The Ministry's National PPE Supply Chain has good stocks of PPE, with at least a month's reserves to meet pandemic demand. In addition, we continue to confirm orders and receive shipments of more PPE every week.

Last week we distributed 17,234 N95 masks, 1,674,150 procedure masks, 6,000 Level 3 masks (or equivalent), 438,580 isolation gowns, 420,700 disposable aprons, 1,300 bouffant and shoe covers, 220 glasses/goggles, 4,850 face shields, 614,200 nitrile gloves, 1,267,800 vinyl gloves, 32,875 hand sanitisers (500ml) and 52,200 disinfectant wipes for use in the health and disability sector. This week we are expecting to receive supplies of N95 masks, procedure masks and Level 3 masks.

Freight challenges continue to be a domestic and global issue and the Ministry continues to monitor the global supply chain during increased demand within the Northern Hemisphere for PPE and other critical medical supplies. While our supplies of PPE are not currently directly impacted by these freight challenges, we have asked DHBs to signal any supply concerns or constraints they are facing regarding products that are utilised on a regular basis. This will help future supply chain planning.

The principles which guide the provision of PPE from the central supply take into account:

- The type of service that requires the PPE
- The vulnerability of the community for whom the service is intended
- The level of inventory: stock on order, on hand and consumption rates
- Urgency of need across the country.

General practices, urgent medical care providers and pharmacies receive masks directly from the Ministry of Health at Alert Levels 2 and above. For those general practices carrying out swabbing, full PPE can be directly sourced from the Ministry at all Alert Levels. This ensures the supply of PPE is consistent across New Zealand and the right PPE is available for those carrying out swabbing. More detail about the principles which guide provision is available on the Ministry's website. General practice and urgent medical care providers have been contacted and asked to register their details with our online ordering management team.

If you are asked to pay for a COVID-19 test, please report it to your **District Health Board** or **Primary Health Organisation**.

Contact tracing

If someone has COVID-19, the local Public Health Units (PHU) will investigate and identify anyone else who may have been in contact with them, to see if they have also been infected. This process is called contact tracing.

If you are called by our contact tracers, please take or return the call. The PHU, Ministry or Healthline will provide you with advice on self-isolation and they will check on your health and wellbeing.

Contact tracing allows for testing, isolation and treatment to be undertaken if required. It is a key part of our COVID-19 elimination strategy and the Ministry of Health also provides a back-up service to support Public Health Units if there is a surge of cases.

There's information about the types of contacts on our **website**.

Day 12 testing for close contacts

The Ministry recommends all COVID-19 close contacts are tested on around day 12 testing of their 14-day self-isolation period. This includes all household close contacts, and any others as determined by the local Medical Officer of Health (for example, when there are multiple cases at an institution or work premises).

While day-12 testing is strongly encouraged for all close contacts, it is not a requirement unless there are specific grounds for public health concern.

NZ COVID Tracer QR codes

As a reminder, businesses must continue to display their official NZ COVID Tracer QR codes across all Alert Levels.

Any business that has not already generated an official QR code can get started by visiting the Ministry of Health website **here**.

QR code posters should be printed in A4, in colour if possible. At least one copy should be displayed in a prominent place at or near the main entrance to the premises, and further copies can be placed in other locations that are convenient for people to scan. The tops of the posters should be approximately 130cm from the ground so everyone can reach them.

QR code poster changes

- Displaying a QR code makes it easier for anyone visiting you to keep track of where they've been, which speeds up contact tracing if a visitor test positive for COVID-19.
- We've now made it easier for anyone holding a private event to get a QR code poster. You don't need a business number or driver licence.
- While businesses and services must display the official NZ COVID Tracer QR code posters under all alert levels, it's not a legal requirement for private events and social gatherings.
- However, if you're hosting an event, we encourage you to get a QR code for your visitors to scan. You can also get a QR code for your vehicle.
- It means your visitors can quickly and easily add your event to their digital diary, which keeps us all safe.
- You can get a QR code poster through **our website**.