

# COVID-19

## COVID-19 health key messages

12 November 2021

### Approved messages from the Ministry of Health for use in your communications

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

### New Zealand Alert Level status

Auckland and parts of Waikato are at Alert Level 3 Step 2. These settings will be reviewed on Monday 15 November.

Upper Northland is now at Alert Level 2.

The rest of New Zealand is at Alert Level 2.

Find out what you need to do at different Alert Levels [Unite Against COVID-19](#)

### COVID-19 vaccination figures update

Yesterday, **22,794** vaccines were administered. Of those, **6,285** were first doses and **16,509** were second doses administered. To date, **3,779,577** people (**80%** of the eligible population) are fully vaccinated.

[COVID-19 vaccine data and statistics – Ministry of Health](#)

### Community cases update

There are **201** new cases of COVID-19 in the community today - **181** are in Auckland, **15** are in Waikato, **4** are in Northland and **1** is in Taranaki.

[Locations of interest – Ministry of Health](#)

### Testing figures update

In the last 24 hours **30,653** tests were processed across New Zealand.

### Clarification of the Ministry's policy on the cost of testing

There is increasing prevalence of businesses requiring their employees to get a COVID-19 test. It is up to individual businesses to determine what, if any, additional requirements they apply to their employees to limit the spread of COVID-19. Surveillance testing by the business sector (testing outside of mandatory requirements) is not part of the public health response and is not free. The current policy on the cost of testing is on the Ministry of Health website.

[Assessment and testing for COVID-19 – Ministry of Health](#)

## **COVID-19 Testing Strategy for Aotearoa New Zealand**

New Zealand's elimination strategy has been highly successful. The use of public health measures, such as Alert Levels 3 and 4 lockdowns when needed, has allowed us to keep cases, hospitalisations, and death rates very low by international standards.

As we transition into a new phase in our national approach to the Delta variant, we are introducing several measures that will provide a pathway out of lockdowns and reconnect New Zealand.

Once 90 per cent of eligible New Zealanders are fully vaccinated, we will enter the COVID-19 Protection Framework, which will allow greater freedoms for vaccinated New Zealanders and greater guarantees for businesses.

Testing, contact tracing and isolation will continue to be key tools to minimise any spread of the virus, but we must change the way we apply these tools as we move forwards.

We are currently developing our new COVID-19 Testing Strategy, with the focus being to align our approach to testing to the Protection Framework. As with all the work we do in the COVID-19 Directorate, equity is at the heart of this Strategy and community engagement with testing has been a key consideration.

We will provide further updates as the new Testing Strategy is finalised.

## **Mandatory vaccinations for the health and disability sector**

Health and disability workers who are employed or volunteer in a private or public facility must receive their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine by 11.59pm Monday 15 November 2021, and their second dose by 1 January 2022.

Considering the important roles these workers undertake and the population groups they work with, as well as whānau and members of the wider community, it is critical for staff working in these key sectors to be vaccinated.

Since healthcare and disability workers have been prioritised for vaccination against COVID-19 since March 2021 most people in these sectors have already been vaccinated. However, complete protection across these sectors is critical to the country's successful management of COVID-19.

[COVID-19: Mandatory vaccinations – Ministry of Health](#)

## **Self-isolation for international arrivals post-MIQ**

From 14 November the time international arrivals to New Zealand must spend in managed isolation is halved from 14 to 7 days, followed by self-isolation until a negative 'day 9' test is received.

While in self-isolation people cannot go out for any reason, other than to get their day 9 test, must maintain physical distancing from any other householders, can have no visitors, must have any deliveries done contactless and must obey a range of other requirements. They will be given detailed guidance, which is also available on the Ministry of Health website. They are required to abide by these requirements until they receive a negative day 9 PCR test, at which point they are safe to re-enter the community.

The public health risk of the shortened MIQ stay is low. With most people returning now reporting being fully vaccinated, the risk profile of international arrivals has changed. They're now considered at low risk of spreading COVID-19 and positive cases are mostly picked up within 7 days of arriving in MIQ. Also, international evidence increasingly suggests that increased frequency of testing helps manage the public

health risks associated with the shorter stay. As well as having a pre-departure test, international arrivals will be tested in MIQ on day 0/1, day 3, and day 5/6. They will also get a PCR test on day 9 of their self-isolation and must stay in self-isolation until a negative result comes back. This is compulsory and will be tracked through an automated system.

[COVID-19: Self-isolation for international arrivals post-MIQ](#)

### **A reminder about our COVID-19 health key messages**

Remember that from next week we will begin sending our health key messages using Campaign Monitor and reducing the frequency to twice-weekly (Tuesday and Thursday).

## **COVID-19 Health key messages 10 November 2021**

### **Mandatory vaccinations – new process for health exemptions**

As part of the Ministry of Health's work on vaccine mandates and vaccine certificates, a central process is being finalised for the small group of people who need to apply for an exemption on medical grounds.

The application will be used for people who are required to be vaccinated under the mandatory Vaccination Order because they work in roles in health and disability, education and Corrections.

This new process will ensure that all applications for exemptions are properly considered by the right people, and only granted where there are genuine reasons for doing so.

The review panel will be made up of qualified clinicians, and of expert advisors from the sectors for which vaccine mandates have been applied. The health exemptions panel make-up will be confirmed soon.

[COVID-19: Exemptions and exceptions from mandatory vaccinations – Ministry of Health](#)

### **AstraZeneca vaccine option**

We are currently working to make the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine available as a second option for people who cannot have the Pfizer vaccine for medical reasons (this is estimated to be only a few hundred people), and for others who have different reasons for wishing to have an option to the Pfizer vaccine.

This includes people who need to be immunised against COVID-19 because of the nature of their work - to protect themselves, their whānau, and the people they work with including patients and school children.

Individuals who are eligible for the AstraZeneca vaccine will also need to be aged 18 or over.

New Zealand has purchase agreements for four COVID-19 vaccines. So far, the Pfizer, AstraZeneca, and Janssen COVID-19 vaccines have been provisionally approved by Medsafe.

Like Pfizer vaccines, AstraZeneca vaccines are administered as a two-dose course to be fully immunised. We expect AstraZeneca vaccines to be available in late November.

Details will be announced next week but work is well underway to prepare for the arrival of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines in the coming weeks. This includes workforce training, establishing the clinics, preparing cold storage facilities and other logistical measures are in place.

The Pfizer vaccine will continue to be the mainstay of New Zealand's COVID-19 immunisation programme.

### **Pfizer booster gets Medsafe approval**

Medsafe has approved booster doses of the Pfizer vaccine for people aged 18 and older. The booster dose will be administered as a single dose at least six months after a person completed their primary course of two doses.

The next step is for the COVID-19 Technical Advisory Group and the Ministry of Health to provide advice to Ministers by mid-November. This is to inform the use of booster doses, including the age limits and interval between when a person has their second dose and a booster dose.

We will have details on the rollout of boosters next week including how to book. We expect around 450,000 people to be eligible before Christmas and we have the capability and scale to deliver additional Pfizer vaccines, as required, quickly and efficiently.

We have already introduced a third primary dose of Pfizer for people who are severely immunocompromised. Evidence has shown that people who are severely immunocompromised require three doses to have the same level of protection as two doses in those who are not immunocompromised. If you are in this group of people, you become eligible for a booster dose six months after your third dose.

As we have done throughout the programme, we will continue use the best clinical advice, informed by international evidence, and we will follow our robust approval processes, before shifting to this next phase of the vaccination programme.

### **Update on variants of SARS CoV-2 virus**

The Ministry of Health provides fortnightly updates on the variants of the SAR CoV2 virus that causes COVID-19. Data for the Delta variant is emerging at pace.

[COVID-19: Science news – variants update – Ministry of Health](#)