

COVID-19

COVID-19 Deaths, funerals and tangihanga: Information for families and whānau at Alert Level 2

7 September 2021

At Alert Level 2 gatherings, including funerals and tangihanga, are restricted to:

- 50 people for indoor services, for example an indoor funeral or tangi at a marae
- 100 people for outdoor services, for example a burial or interment.

At Alert Level 2, we must continue to maintain a high level of vigilance to protect ourselves and others and slow the spread of COVID-19.

Already, iwi and hapū have been adapting tikanga and kawa to keep our people safe. This has also extended to tangihanga.

If your loved one passes away in hospital

You may be able to view them at a safe distance before and after their death, but only if the hospital is allowing visitors. Remote viewing may be available through technology.

You will not be permitted to touch, wash and/or dress your loved one's body at the hospital. The hospital will transfer your loved one to the mortuary, and then into your funeral director's care.

If your loved one passes away at home

Whānau and friends touching, washing and/or dressing your loved one's body poses a significant health risk and it is strongly advised against. The funeral director will transfer your loved one to their facilities.

Funeral directors may allow religious rituals for the care of the body to occur. However, these must be carried out in the presence of an embalmer who will give direction to anyone present on the correct requirements. Activities such as kissing, washing or touching the body should be discouraged before, during and after any ritual.

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If your loved one passes away overseas

People who die overseas can be repatriated to New Zealand provided the funeral director meets the international requirements. The funeral director will know what paperwork is required for customs and biosecurity.

Marae

Marae might choose to reopen at Alert Level 2. If they open, marae will need to implement a health and safety plan and other measures.

Tangihanga, kawē/hari mate, hura kōhatu

Bereaved families and whānau from all cultures and backgrounds will find this time challenging. This makes it even more important we show each other kindness and caring, manaakitanga and aroha.

People at higher risk of illness from COVID-19 are encouraged to think about how attending gatherings can be done safely. This includes kaumātua, women who are more than 28 weeks pregnant, and whānau members who are immune-compromised or have cancer or pre-existing conditions such as cardiovascular disease, respiratory issues, kidney problems, diabetes or high blood pressure. More information for higher risk people can be found [here](#).

Burial or nehunga and following

It is important that the group who attends the tangihanga directly before the burial or nehunga must be the same group that travels from the service with the tūpāpaku to the cemetery or urupā.

This same group can be provided with food and refreshments following the burial or nehunga. It is recommended gatherings following the burial, nehunga and cremation are kept short (under two hours).

Groupings of no more than 10 people should eat together, food should be served as individual portions and not from a buffet, and no alcohol may be served or consumed on the premises.

Travel

Travel within Alert Level 2 (or transiting through Alert Level 4) to attend a funeral or tangihanga

This is permitted as long as your departure or destination point isn't inside the Alert Level 4 region and the travel through Alert Level 4 is necessary to get to the funeral or tangihanga. You do not need an exemption or approval but should carry some evidence of your reason for travel.

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Travel from Alert Level 4 to Alert Level 2 to attend a funeral or tangihanga

This is not permitted travel. Given the risk of transmitting COVID-19, the Director-General has decided that exemption applications for this type of travel will not be considered.

Travel from Alert Level 2 to Alert Level 4 to attend a funeral or tangihanga

This is not permitted travel. Funerals and tangihanga are not permitted at Alert Level 4, along with any other form of gathering.

Honouring your loved one

You may engage the services of a priest, minister, celebrant, kaikōrero/kaikaranga or other to conduct karakia, poroporoakī, and mihi at the funeral home, marae and/or urupā. However, hygiene protocols should be followed.

You may choose to livestream your time at the marae, funeral home, private residence, cemetery and/or urupā to include whānau and friends who could not attend. Funeral directors may be able to assist you at the funeral home.

Once we recover from this pandemic, your whānau may want to come together to honour your loved one. If your whānau member was cremated, you may want to bury their ashes at a whānau urupā. If they were buried immediately, you may choose to hold a service at the burial grounds. These are only some of the ways you may choose to remember your lost loved one.

Getting support

We encourage whānau to use the services of their local 'kaiwhakarite', deceased loved one's health providers and Police iwi liaison officers.

Grieving is never easy. If you feel you are not coping, it is important to talk with a health professional. For support with grief, anxiety, distress or mental wellbeing, you can call or text 1737 for free to talk with a trained counsellor. This service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

More information

More information about requirements for funerals and tangihanga information is available on the Ministry of Health [website](#).