

# PANDEMIC COMMUNICATION: COVID-19 PROVIDER NETWORK UPDATE

August 18 2021

We are at Alert Level 4. It is pleasing to see how smoothly you have responded and activated your pandemic plans. Please continue to engage with us if we can support you in any way.

Our focus is on you, and ensuring you have the information you need, when you need it, in order for you to care for your staff and your clients.

In this update:

- Alert Level 4 and Yellow Alert – what it means for providers (plus attachment)
- Ensuring access to health care
- PPE/Mask advice
- COVID-19 Vaccinations Resume Tomorrow
- COVID-19 Testing Capacity Increase
- All other immunisations to continue
- Guidance for Well Child Tamariki Ora providers (plus attachment)
- Contracts
- Aged Residential Care
- Pharmacy
- Community SitRep no 55 (attached)

## ALERT LEVEL 4 AND COVID-19 COMMUNITY YELLOW ALERT

Having two national alert levels which combine and mean different things is confusing. To help we have attached the Ministry of Health's Community Response Framework. It means that while we are at the highest level of lockdown, of the four 'colour' alert levels – green, yellow, orange, red - we are at **yellow**. For delivery of services this means:

- Continue screening for COVID-19 symptoms and travel history
- Activate your pandemic plans
- Move to virtual or non-contact care wherever possible
- Initial assessments of people with COVID-like symptoms are done at primary care
- Ensure priority populations have access to necessary care
- Activate appropriate PPE plans as per Ministry of Health guidance
- Cease non-essential service delivery as per Ministry of Health guidance
- Implement referral/delivery processes for non-health related welfare concerns
- Implement relationships with Civil Defence welfare responses to support welfare needs

To help you become familiar with what the colour levels mean for you, we have attached the Ministry of Health response framework. You can also find it on the Ministry's website

<https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/covid-19-community-response-framework-v2-20sep2020.pdf>.

We will advise you when there are any changes to levels. The Ministry of Health website remains the source of truth for up-to-date information at all times.

## ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE

Under Alert Level 4 people can access medical care, and it is important they do so. We have reports of people coming to ED saying they were sent by their GP practice which was closed at Level 4. General Practices / Primary Care remain open, and GPs are now well versed with technology for phone and video consultations, and creating safe spaces for people coming in for face-to-face consultations.

Please encourage your whanau and family not to leave it too long to seek help.

Te Awakairanga has made some excellent resources available for your use to get the message out about not waiting to get medical help if you need it.

Virtual nan <https://youtu.be/YgXVGXKwNso>

Good GP <https://youtu.be/DPKzXzZuoAE>

## PPE/MASKS

### N95 FIT TESTING EXCEPTION

Ministry of Health has provided a 14 day exemption for fit testing N95 respirators. Particulate respirators will be available to those general practice and urgent care clinics that are undertaking swabbing and assessing patients in close contact with anyone with symptoms and meets the HIS criteria during an evolving community outbreak or Alert Level 3 or 4. Please refer to the [COVID-19 Primary Care](#) site for more information.

This exemption notes the risk the Ministry of Health cannot predict the protection an ill fitted N95/P2 will afford. A particulate respirator itself does not have a high filtration efficiency, unless a tight seal is achieved.

### MASKS

One of the big changes to Alert Level 4 this time around is the stricter guidelines around mask wearing.

All staff at work are required to wear masks and maintain a 2m distance from other workers. [Please follow Ministry of Health guidance for mask wearing in clinical and non-clinical areas.](#)

Advice at this time is masks are to be worn by all staff – medical (surgical) mask

- Masks on patients/clients if over 12 years of age
- Patients who cannot tolerate mask do not need to wear a mask
- Long term residential patients do not need to wear a mask

We now have some specific guidance to offer from our IPC team and refer you to these links for quick reference guides:

[PPE for primary care/CTCs \(not vaccination programme\) regarding masks](#)

[PPE for swabbing centres](#)

### Key points

- Wear surgical masks in work places at all times unless you are doing an activity that requires N95 use
- At CTCs where there is good ventilation (i.e. outdoor sites/tent sites) – a medical mask is still recommended along with eye protection.
- Continuous use (sessional) use of masks is recommended to preserve stocks
  - Medical masks should be changed after four hours or if soiled/damp, or when taking a meal break
- N95 use for clinical staff is recommended when:
  - Taking nasopharyngeal swabs (at CTC or primary care practice where there is an indoor environment and suboptimal ventilation)
  - Assessing a patient with HIS criteria or symptoms of acute respiratory tract infection  
*More information on this is on the MoH primary care guidance Aug 10 2021 (link above)*
  - Eye protection is also important – don't forget this!
  - Swab taking or assessment of patients should occur in a well ventilated environment. If indoors, the door to the corridor/other rooms should be closed and keep a window open if this is possible/tolerable.
- Notes about N95 use:
  - Due to limited supply of N95 masks, these should also be used as continuous/sessional use
  - It is recommended you take a break every 2-4 hours if wearing N95 mask
  - There is a temporary exemption notice which enables HCW to use an N95 mask when clinically appropriate even if not fit tested – *refer to the item above*
  - Remember fit testing only indicates what size and shape mask you should be using – you still need to make sure that you achieve a good seal when you put it on. This is a seal check and is the most important step!
    - Remember – you won't be able to get a seal if you have facial hair under the edge of the mask
- Whatever mask you wear:
  - Touch your face as little as possible and have clean hands anytime you do touch your face (including using hand rub or washing hands before and after removing your mask)
  - Dispose of your mask safely – don't leave it on desks or tables; don't stuff it in your pocket

If you have any specific concerns around PPE, please email [PPECOVID19COMMUN@ccdhb.org.nz](mailto:PPECOVID19COMMUN@ccdhb.org.nz).

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### REMINDER

The Deaf community and those who are hard of hearing have trouble communicating and understanding when masks are worn. Deaf and Hard of Hearing people are all different and may have different communication preferences. You might try the following to find out what they need:

- Offer them the “Hello I’m Deaf” or “Hello I’m Hard of Hearing” cards so that people can choose one and indicate a preference (see attachments for printable versions)
- Write or draw on a piece of paper, or your phone. If you have an iPhone you can use your Notes app for speech to text – tap the microphone icon at the bottom of the keyboard, and speak into your phone, which will immediately display what you said in text form so that the person can read it.

It is important to remember that for many Deaf people English is a second language and writing is not an effective way to communicate. If someone uses NZSL, it is best to book an interpreter.

For more advice or information about booking interpreters or working with Deaf people, contact the Disability team. [Rachel.noble@ccdhb.org.nz](mailto:Rachel.noble@ccdhb.org.nz) 0800DISABILITY

## COVID-19 VACCINATIONS RESUME

Vaccination can recommence in primary care from tomorrow but primary care sites must be set up to safely deliver vaccines at Alert Level 4. Existing bookings should be honoured.

## COVID-19 TESTING CAPACITY INCREASE

We have worked with our PHO partners to increase operating hours and raise staffing levels at our existing Community Testing Centres (CTCs) to increase testing capacity. There has been increased demand for testing across the region, so a new testing centre has been established at Hataitai Park and will be operational from 6pm this evening until 9pm and then daily. Full details of CTCs, their locations and opening times can be found here.

<https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/covid-19/wellington/>

<https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/covid-19/hutt/>

## ALL OTHER IMMUNISATIONS

We want to remind everyone about the importance of continuing with all Schedule vaccinations which are permitted to continue over this period.

General Practices and Outreach services across the country should still be functioning during Alert Level 4 to deliver essential health services and this includes National Immunisation Schedule vaccinations. There was an unfortunate drop-off in immunisation uptake last year with the lock down and we are very keen to avoid this again.

## GUIDANCE FOR WELL CHILD TAMARIKI ORA PROVIDERS

Guidance for WCTO service delivery in Alert Level 4 is attached. Main points include delaying face-to-face visits during Alert Level 4 but continuing non-face-to-face contacts for all whanau with new babies.

## CONTRACTS

Provider payments will continue as usual even if service cannot be provided. There will be no financial penalty for any change in service over the next three days.

Please contact your contract manager directly if you have any questions or concerns. Alternatively, respond to this email and your question will be directed to the most appropriate team member.

## AGED RESIDENTIAL CARE

Aged Residential Care facilities can accept patients at Level 4. If you have any questions or concerns please email us at [COVID-19questions@ccdhb.org.nz](mailto:COVID-19questions@ccdhb.org.nz) and a member of the team will respond. Or you can contact your contract manager.

## PHARMACY

Pharmacies remain open for business. All staff and customers must wear masks and maintain a 2m distance in any interactions. We have promoted this message through our social media channels and encourage you to do the same.

## YOUR WELLBEING

Your health and the health and well-being of your teams and all our people is critical to helping us get through this. You are providing an essential service and your teams and colleagues are expected to support the day-to-day operations at a time when they are already tired. We encourage you and your people to take a break when you can, even if it's an hour to take a walk in the fresh air (between rain showers) or a quiet time away from your phones or emails. This is a marathon, not a sprint, and the most powerful way you can support the wellbeing of your team is to look after yourself and model good self-care.

## THANK YOU

Once again, thank you for all the support you have shown my team and each other as we went through our first day of Level 4 lockdown. Your hard work and dedication to the people you are delivering service to doesn't go unnoticed. If you have any questions or concerns please email us at [COVID-19questions@ccdhb.org.nz](mailto:COVID-19questions@ccdhb.org.nz) and a member of the team will respond. Or you can contact your contract manager.

**Rachel Haggerty**

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