

Information for disabled people or people who need support for daily life and their family/whānau

16 March 2020

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance on preventing the spread of COVID-19.

This information sheet should be read in conjunction with information available at health.govt.nz/covid-19

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a new illness that can affect your lungs and airways. It's caused by a virus called coronavirus. There are simple steps you can take to protect you and your family and whānau.

How COVID-19 spreads

COVID-19, like the flu, can be spread from person to person. When a person who has COVID-19 coughs, sneezes or talks they may spread droplets containing the virus a short distance which quickly settle on surrounding surfaces.

You may get infected by the virus if you touch those surfaces or objects and then touch your mouth, nose or eyes.

At risk populations

Some disabled people may be more at risk of COVID-19 infection:

- People who have conditions that compromise their immune systems or who have compromised immune systems as a side effect of taking certain medications such as chemotherapy or other medications.
- People who have chronic medical conditions such as liver disease, heart disease, kidney disease diabetes mellitus, and lung disease or other long-term conditions.
- People with a disability and co-existing long-term conditions.
- People who have medical devices that enter the body (e.g. a catheter, tracheostomy, ileostomy, feeding tube).
- People with surgical or large wounds.
- Frail older people.

Protecting yourself and others

You should practice good hygiene by:

- covering coughs and sneezes with disposable tissues or your elbow.

- Putting used tissues in the bin or a bag immediately.
- Washing your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water and dry them thoroughly:
 - before eating or handling food
 - after using the toilet
 - after coughing, sneezing, blowing your nose or wiping children's noses
 - after caring for sick people.
- If soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitiser that has at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean.
- Avoid physical contact when greeting people
- Avoid contact with people who are unwell.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as doorknobs.
- Stay home if you feel unwell.

Be prepared

You and your family and whānau should take your normal extra precautions to avoid any winter illnesses to stop yourself getting sick. It is a good idea to plan for and start those now. This could include:

- Staying home as much as possible and avoiding crowds.
- Avoiding shared/public transportation if possible - use a car or taxi.
- Making sure you have access to several weeks of medication supplies in case you need to stay at home for an extended period of time.
- Stocking up on basic household items and groceries to limit the number of trips to the supermarket or ordering your groceries online and having it delivered to your door. Below are links to Countdown and New World online shopping web sites.
<https://shop.countdown.co.nz/>
<https://www.newworld.co.nz/shop/online-shopping>
- Developing a plan for what you will do if people you rely on for support become sick. Talk to people who need to be included in your plan: household members, neighbours, other relatives, whānau and friends, support service providers and support workers.
 - If you are on Individualised Funding, or have a personal budget, you can contact your Host or your NASC coordinator for help with accessing short-term cover for support workers who are sick or self-isolating.
 - Work out who can provide you with support if your usual support workers get sick.

If it should become necessary, you might consider extra measures to put distance between yourself and others. For example,

- If you work, speaking to your employer about the possibility of working from home.
- If your disabled or immune-compromised child is at school, consider schooling them from home if possible.

Stay up to date with COVID-19 developments in New Zealand on the Ministry of Health website

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>

Self-isolation

If workers have been in or transited through Category 1a or 1b countries or territories, excluding airport transits (health.govt.nz/covid19-countries-areas-concern) or have been in close contact with someone confirmed with COVID-19 in the last 14 days. We ask that you self-isolate for 14 days from the date of departure or close contact.

- Please register your details with Healthline if you have not already (call **0800 358 5453**).

If you need to self-isolate, you can still receive your essential supports, with the appropriate infection control measures. Infection control measures are to protect you, your staff, and other people.

- Advise your support worker and/or provider that you are self-isolating because you may have COVID-19. They will do an assessment to work out what infection control measures they need to take when visiting you.
- When your support workers visit you:
 - wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water
 - advise other members of your home to stay in another room.
- If you have support workers who provide personal care and you can't stay more than 2 metres away from them, your support worker may wear one or more of these forms of protective equipment:
 - gloves
 - surgical face mask
 - disposable, fluid resistant gown
 - eye protection.
- If you have support workers who provide household management support, you should:
 - stay in your room away from your support person
 - if unable to stay at least 2 metres away from your support worker, wear a face mask if you can.
- When your household management support workers visit you, they should:
 - wear gloves and use alcohol-based hand sanitiser before and after wearing gloves
 - if they are cleaning rooms, they may also wish to wear a surgical mask as an added precaution.
- If you employ your support people directly (for example, if you are on Individualised Funding) you are responsible for providing your support workers with the protective equipment listed above. You can order these materials from your local district health board.

District health board contact list

DHB	Phone number
Northland – Whangarei	(09) 430 4100
Waitematā – North Shore	(09) 486 8900
Auckland	(09) 367 0000
Counties Manukau	(09) 262 9500

Waikato	(07) 839 8899
Bay of Plenty – Tauranga	(07) 579 8000
Tairāwhiti – Gisborne	(06) 869 0500
Hawke’s Bay – Napier/Hastings	(06) 878 8109
Lakes DHB – Taupo/Rotorua	(07) 348 1199
Taranaki – New Plymouth	(06) 753 6139
Whanganui	(06) 348 1234
MidCentral – Palmerston North	(06) 350 8061
Wairarapa – Masterton	(06) 946 9800
Hutt Valley – Upper/Lower Hutt	(04) 566 6999
Capital & Coast – Kapiti Coast/Porirua/Wellington	(04) 385 5999
Nelson Marlborough – Nelson/Blenheim	(03) 546 1800
Canterbury – Christchurch/Kaikoura/Ashburton	(03) 364 0490
South Canterbury – Timaru	(03) 687 2100
West Coast – Greymouth/Hokitika/Westport	(03) 769 7400
Southern	(03) 474 0999

Taking care of your wellbeing

Your emotional and mental health is important. It is normal to feel stressed or lonely when self-isolating, but there are some things you can do to feel better:

- Reach out to your usual support, like family, whānau and friends and talk about how you feel. We also recommend sticking to a routine such as having regular mealtimes, bedtimes and exercising.
- If you feel you are not coping, it is important to talk to a health professional. For support with grief, anxiety, distress or mental wellbeing, you can call or text 1737 – free, anytime, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week – to talk with a trained counsellor.

If you, or your family member, become sick

Contact Healthline for free on **0800 358 5453**, or your GP if you begin to feel sick. The symptoms of COVID-19 are cough, fever, and shortness of breath.

More information

Call Healthline 24/7 on **0800 358 5453** if you need to speak to someone.

Visit www.health.govt.nz/covid-19 for more information.

If you have concerns about your health, speak to your doctor.