

## Primary Care Update

### Information for general practices, PHOs and DHBs

Update Two: May 2020

Māuri ora ki a koutou

This is the second quarterly primary care update for general practice and primary health organisations (PHOs). We delayed producing this update due to the COVID-19 response and additional pressures on primary care. Thank you for all the work you are doing to keep the primary care health system operating.

You can find previous primary care updates on the [Ministry of Health website](#).

### Information for the move to Alert Level 2 at 11.59pm Wednesday 13 May 2020

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The Government has announced New Zealand will move from Alert Level 3 to Alert Level 2 at 11.59pm on Wednesday 13 May. Until then we are still in Alert Level 3.

Temporary limits on gathering numbers will be in place when we first move to Alert Level 2.

Cabinet will review Alert Level 2 restrictions on Monday 25 May.

If you receive queries can you please direct your patients to information at <https://covid19.govt.nz/alert-system/alert-level-2/>

### COVID-19 Contact Tracing

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Thank you for continuing to regularly update your patients' records in the National Enrolment Service (NES) to support contact tracing for COVID-19.

As part of the Ministry of Health's National Close Contact Service, we may call a general practice to ask if the contact phone numbers and email address on an enrolled patient's NES record are the most recent, or where contact phone numbers and an email address have not been uploaded to NES, ask for them to be uploaded.

The National Close Contact Service will contact your patient shortly after you provide the information - there is no need for you to contact your patient.

If you are concerned about the legitimacy of such a call, the Ministry of Health contact tracing representative will advise you to call the call centre ([0800 855 066](tel:0800855066)) to be redirected back to them.

### Rural General Practice Roving Locum Support during COVID-19

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Acknowledging the unique challenges faced by rural practices in responding to COVID-19, the New Zealand Rural General Practice network has been funded to provide additional locum support. The COVID-19

Pandemic Emergency Roving Locum (PERL) scheme is targeted to those rural practices located close to an identified cluster area or those that have existing chronic workforce shortages.

The scheme will include anyone in the practice team: General Practitioners, Nurse Practitioners, Practice Nurses and Practice Managers and will provide this locum support for smaller rural practices for up to two weeks. It will include funding to pay for the locum, their accommodation and transport/mileage to and from the practice. However, the scheme is flexible and other types of support will be considered.

While priority will be given to assist this group of practices, requests for assistance from other rural practices will be considered on a case by case basis, with the level of support available depending on the initial uptake by the target group.

Each application will be considered by an Application Assessment Panel.

Any rural practices needing additional locum support should contact: [enquiries@nzlocums.com](mailto:enquiries@nzlocums.com) or 0800 695 628.

## Keeping up with Child Health during COVID-19

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Early health care for infants/pēpi and an ongoing focus on equity of health outcomes, is important during the pandemic and its aftermath. Key information is outlined below.

- Six week checks aligned with the six week scheduled immunisations remain a priority and provide opportunity to ensure new whānau are well engaged with their local general practice team. Catching up on any deferred immunisations is always important.
- Well Child Tamariki Ora services are continuing with an increasing availability of face-to-face contact. There will be an ongoing focus on first pēpi (first time parents), Māori and Pacific children, those from lower socio economic areas (Quintile 5) and where higher need has been identified. Please check that all children you are seeing are engaged with their local Well Child Tamariki Ora service.
- Keep an eye out for maternal depression and whānau stress and be ready to link with other local social services.

Guidelines for Well Child Tamariki Ora service delivery during Alert Level 2 accompany this update. Could DHBs please ensure that all DHB-contracted Well Child and Tamariki Ora and B4 School Check service providers receive this information.

## Rheumatic Fever Prevention

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During this COVID-19 period all patients presenting with sore throat require COVID swabbing. Do not examine sore throats or perform COVID-19 swabs if you do not have the correct PPE.

If laboratory capacity permits, a Group A Strep swab may be done as long as it can be followed up. Start empiric antibiotics for those with a sore throat at high risk for rheumatic fever (i.e. Māori and Pacific patients aged 3 – 35 years, particularly children and youth aged 4 – 19 years).

When taking a clinically indicated throat swab, then Personal Protective Equipment should be used. Where usual throat swabbing or testing is not available then empiric treatment is acceptable in the populations at risk, especially for Māori and Pacific children and youth aged 4 to 19 years.

Refer <https://www.heartfoundation.org.nz/resources/a-guide-for-sore-throat-management-algorithm>

## **Health Pathways**

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Canterbury Community Health Pathways has produced a pathway for the Ongoing Assessment and Management of COVID-19 patients in the community, with a particular emphasis on monitoring for deterioration. This has some Canterbury specific elements, particularly regarding the provision of monitoring. However, it has been shared with your local Health Pathways team with encouragement to localise this pathway (or an alternative, for example, from the Northland Community Health Pathways site) to make it more useful for you.

To view the Canterbury pathway go to <https://canterbury.communityhealthpathways.org/728651.htm> user name: covid and password: covid.

To communicate with your own local Health Pathways team, click the feedback button on the home page, or on any of the COVID-19 pathways, of your own local Community Health Pathways site.

If you don't have access to your own local site, you can obtain a link from [www.healthpathwayscommunity.org](http://www.healthpathwayscommunity.org)

## **High Use Health Card and Special Authority application forms**

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The Ministry has been exploring new ways of working under COVID-19. One of the areas highlighted under COVID-19 is how High Use Health Card and Special Authority application forms are accepted via email.

Guidelines accompanying this update provide practitioners with information that must be considered when sending application forms via email. Please take the time to read the communication, so you are fully aware of your obligations.

If you have any questions please contact us on [0800 855 066](tel:0800855066), option 3.

## **Funded temporary accommodation is available for the front-line health and disability workforce**

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To ensure the health and disability workforce remain safe while at work, DHBs and employers have already implemented a range of initiatives, including:

- introducing a category system to identify workers who are vulnerable to COVID-19 and taking steps to modify their duties where appropriate.
- making sure all DHB facilities can separate suspected COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 cases into COVID-19 / non-COVID-19 streams.
- ensuring that all staff working in the COVID-19 stream have appropriate PPE.

Another initiative to keep the health and disability workforce safe was announced on Tuesday 12 May 2020 - front-line workers who need to stay away from their homes during COVID-19 can now apply for government-funded temporary accommodation.

Workers in roles where they may have close contact with patients can qualify if they've been asked to relocate to a different part of the country as part of the COVID-19 response, or they live with a vulnerable person who is at higher risk of severe illness should they contract COVID-19.

If you know any providers or workers who could benefit from this initiative, please let them know they can find out more information about the eligibility criteria and application process by visiting our temporary funded accommodation page on <https://www.health.govt.nz/funded-temporary-accommodation>.

## The FluTracking programme

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Flutracking is an online survey which asks whether you have had a fever or cough in the last week and can help track COVID-19. Registering online will help our surveillance efforts by providing early detection of community spread of the flu and also of COVID-19 symptoms.

We encourage people to register online at [www.flutracking.net](http://www.flutracking.net)

This is a practical thing everyone can do to help monitor flu and COVID-19 symptoms throughout NZ.

## National Primary Care Patient Experience Survey

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The New Zealand patient experience primary care survey scheduled for May 2020 is on hold due to COVID-19. The next survey is expected to run in August 2020, but this time frame will be reviewed.

In the meantime, the Health Quality & Safety Commission is exploring running a COVID-19 focused patient experience survey in June.

If you are interested or would like to know more, please contact Joanna Swanson via [Joanna.Swanson@hqsc.govt.nz](mailto:Joanna.Swanson@hqsc.govt.nz) or 04 901 6052.

## Further information

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We welcome your feedback on the information you would find useful from us. Please email [Rachael.Bayliss@health.govt.nz](mailto:Rachael.Bayliss@health.govt.nz) with your suggestions.

Thank you for your support and hard work to provide people with greater access to primary care, particularly during the response to COVID-19.

Ngā mihi nui ki a koutou katoa