

COVID-19: Information for family, whānau, and āiga carers

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Carers are important and working hard during COVID-19

Carers are important and make a significant contribution to the quality of the lives of the friends, family, whānau and āiga members they support. Caring is at the heart of a compassionate community and underpins who we are and what we value. Carers' work is of huge social and economic value to New Zealand.

The role of a carer becomes even more challenging during New Zealand's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. You are performing a key frontline role in keeping things together in your families, whānau and āiga and we acknowledge and value you.

There's lots of helpful information for carers

We know that you may be doing more than usual, so we are thinking of you in how we provide information, funding and access to services. Some of the answers are evolving and we will work with Carers NZ, members of the Carers Alliance, service providers and other partners to keep you informed.

This information has been brought together to make it easy for you to find the support and advice you need at this time. While we will revise this resource as required, things do change, so please regularly check the following COVID-19 and carers online resource sites:

- covid19.govt.nz
- health.govt.nz
- [Ministry of Health carers COVID-19 information](#)
- [Ministry of Social Development carers COVID-19 information](#)

If you do not have internet access to check on the latest news, please use the radio, TV and toll-free phone numbers such as for Carers NZ, Healthline COVID-19 enquiries, Work and Income and others.

At the bottom of this page there is a [list of other sources of information](#).

COVID-19 vaccines

Information about COVID-19 vaccines and how to book an appointment is available on the [Unite Against COVID-19 website](#).

DHBs and all other providers will use a whānau-centred approach to vaccinate family, whānau and āiga members of older people, disabled people and people with relevant underlying health conditions when they accompany them to the appointment. DHBs and providers will consider whether:

- the family, whānau or āiga members are carers of the person to be vaccinated
- there is enough vaccine supply to meet demand
- the family, whānau or āiga members have difficulty accessing the health system, including Māori, Pacific peoples, disabled people, rainbow communities, ethnic minorities and people in remote regions

- there are other risk factors in the household, such as overcrowding or a multi-generational living arrangement.

More information is available on the [Unite Against Covid-19 website](#) and the Ministry of Health's [COVID-19: vaccines](#) page.

COVID-19 Alert Levels

COVID-19 is likely to be with the world for some time. We must be aware and manage the risks for ourselves and the people we care for. In New Zealand, our Alert Level system is used to describe the level of risk and the restrictions that must be followed at each level. Stay informed about New Zealand's current alert levels and find out what this means for you and those you support on the [Unite Against COVID-19 website](#).

Travel at different Alert Levels

Travel is often an essential activity in your daily life as a carer, and for your family, whānau or āiga members receiving care. Alert Levels 3 and 4 limit travel to reduce COVID-19 infection in the community. While travel across Alert Level boundaries is highly restricted, family, whānau or āiga carers should still be able to travel locally within an Alert Level for essential reasons such as:

- accessing essential services such as chemists and supermarkets
- going to get tested, vaccinated or to get medical care
- supporting a family, whānau or āiga member who needs to travel to support their health and wellbeing
- exercising within your neighbourhood or short travel to a place where you will exercise
- shared bubble arrangements and shared caregiver arrangements
- providing urgent care for a child or a person in a critical or terminal condition.

Family members travelling to provide support to someone in their family, whānau or āiga, can travel without an exemption letter.

More information about travel at different Alert Levels, across Alert Level boundaries, and the Alert Level boundary map are on the [Unite Against Covid-19 website](#).

Health and disability

How to protect yourself and the people you care for

Some people are more vulnerable to illnesses. This can include both the people you care for and yourself. There are simple steps that can be taken to protect you and your family, whānau and āiga.

Good hygiene is always important – regularly wash and thoroughly dry your hands, and cough and sneeze into your elbow. It's also important to:

- regularly clean high-touch objects, items and surfaces
- stay home and seek medical advice if unwell
- get a test if necessary.

Maintaining physical distancing from people we don't know or see regularly is also important. Use face masks or coverings on public transport and when you can't physically distance from others you don't know.

The 'bubble of protection' around vulnerable people, and those they have contact with, is vital in preventing and managing the risk of both COVID-19 infection and its complications and other infectious diseases. We need to manage our bubbles so that those who are more vulnerable can be protected. More information is available on our [Protecting yourself and others from COVID-19](#) page.

Assessment and testing for COVID-19

People with any COVID-19 symptoms should get assessed and may need to be tested. Most of the time, a COVID-19 test is free of charge.

The nurse may wear personal protective equipment (such as a mask, gown, face shield and gloves) and will ask you questions about your symptoms, general health, where you live and who you live with.

Testing is done by swabbing the back of your nose or throat. A swab is like a small cotton-bud with a longer stick. The sample goes to a laboratory to be analysed. You will be told when and how you will get your results and what to do while you are waiting for the results.

More information on who should get assessed for a test for COVID-19, how testing works, and where to get tested can be found at [Assessment and testing for COVID-19](#).

Contact tracing and remembering where you've been

If someone has COVID-19, the local public health unit will find out if anyone else may have been in contact with them, to see if they have also been infected. This is called contact tracing.

If you are called by our contact tracers, please take or return the call. The public health unit, Ministry or Healthline will provide you with advice on self-isolation and check on your health and wellbeing.

Contact tracing allows for testing, isolation and treatment if required and is a key part of our COVID-19 elimination strategy.

An important part of contact tracing is remembering where you've been and who you've seen. You can use the NZ COVID Tracer app that creates a digital diary, or the NZ COVID Tracer diary booklet to help.

More information on contact tracing and keeping track of where you have been can be found at [Contact tracing for COVID-19](#).

What to do if you or the person you care for tests positive for COVID-19

If you test positive, you will have a case interview and be asked to move into a quarantine facility as quickly as possible, unless other suitable arrangements are approved by the Medical Officer of Health. Moving to a quarantine facility is to ensure your health and welfare needs are met and to stop risk of infection to your family, whānau, āiga and wider community.

We know this approach may be challenging for the people you might care for and their families, whānau and āiga. People's individual circumstances will be carefully considered in any decision made by the Medical Officer of Health.

Get more information on [testing positive and moving to a quarantine facility](#).

Masks and face coverings

Masks or face coverings are one important way of keeping you safe as a carer and for protecting others you care for and have contact with from COVID-19. The Ministry of Health does not recommend the use of scarves or bandanas.

In general, we encourage you to wear a mask or face covering whenever you leave your home and cannot keep physical distance from others, especially in crowded indoor places. Requirements for masks and face coverings may be different at each Alert Level.

All households should have a supply of masks for each household member.

People with a disability or physical or mental health condition which makes it difficult to wear a mask or face covering are exempt. If you cannot wear a mask or face covering, you can get an exemption card to show

others when needed. You can request a card from the Disabled Persons Assembly NZ by contacting them on [04 801 9100](tel:048019100) or emailing them at info@dpa.org.nz.

It is also important to trust that others are doing the right thing. If someone does not wear a mask or face covering, they may have a legitimate reason. When you are near others who are not wearing a mask and do not know them, keep a distance.

More information on face masks and coverings at different Alert Levels, and how to wear them correctly and safely, can be found on our [Use of masks and face coverings in the community](#) page and the [Unite Against Covid-19](#) website.

People at higher risk

Information for people considered at higher risk of the effects of COVID-19 and for their family, whānau and āiga is available at [Advice for higher risk people](#).

Caring for older people

You can find information specifically for older people and their families, whānau and āiga during the COVID-19 response at [Advice for older people and their family and whānau](#).

Supporting a person with dementia

You may experience extra pressure in supporting someone with dementia during the COVID-19 response. More information for family, whānau, āiga, carers and supporters of people with dementia who are living at home under different Alert Levels is available at [Supporting a person with dementia](#).

Caring for disabled people

Information for disabled people and their families, whānau, āiga and carers during the COVID-19 response, as well as links to accessible information in alternate formats, is available at [Information for disabled people](#).

Read more on our [Delta Alert Level 2](#) page.

Health and disability services at different Alert Levels

Get information on how to access [health and disability services at different Alert Levels](#).

Getting disability support during COVID-19

Information and guidelines for disabled people, and their families, whānau, āiga and carers about health and disability support services at different Alert Levels is available at [Information on disability supports](#).

Hospice patients and end-of-life care

Guidance and information for people who receive hospice care in home and community settings to reduce the impact and spread of COVID-19 is available at [People receiving hospice care at home](#).

Parents

A wide range of information and links to help you care for your tamariki, rangatahi and whānau (including explaining COVID-19, Well Child Tamariki Ora, parents with babies, whānau Māori, advice, support and resources) is available at [Information for parents](#).

Wellbeing

It's important to remember that, when you are caring for someone else, you also need to take care of yourself. A free national mental health and addiction support service is available 24/7 – call or text 1737. Information on other places where you can find mental health and wellbeing support is available at [Mental health and wellbeing resources](#).

Welfare and social sector support

Access to food and other essentials

There are several options to get food delivered if you cannot leave your home.

Ask family, whānau, āiga, friends, or neighbours

Ask people you know and trust if they can shop for you and make a contactless delivery to you. Make sure not to share bankcards and PIN numbers. If you get your supplies delivered and cannot do a contactless delivery, remember to stay two metres away from the person delivering your items, wear a face covering and wash and sanitise your hands after you have put the items away.

The Student Volunteer Army Grocery Delivery Service

This service is available nationwide to people who are self-isolating or who have no other way to access food. You can order online at shop.sva.org.nz, or by phone:

- Auckland: **09 801 2122**
- For the rest of New Zealand: **0800 005 902**.

There is a delivery fee for this service. After you order, a volunteer will do your shopping and make a contactless delivery to you.

Online shopping

You can also do online shopping with local supermarkets. This could include getting groceries delivered or using a click and collect service and getting a friend or family member to pick them up. These services may be in high demand. Some supermarkets may have priority slots reserved for people at higher risk, so contact your local supermarket to find out what's available.

If you cannot get help

If you have tried and cannot access support through any of the options above, contact your local **Civil Defence and Emergency Management (CDEM) Group**.

If you're making purchases online, stay safe by following best practice guidelines for online shopping:

- **Netsafe – online shopping**
- **Age Concern – online security**

If you need help to pay for food

If you cannot pay for food, you may be able to get support from Work and Income with urgent financial support and ongoing needs, including food grants. You don't need to be an existing Work and Income client to get this help. To learn more or check your eligibility, call **0800 559 009** or visit the **Work and Income website**.

Local food banks may also be able to help. You can find these on the **Family Services Directory website**.

Further advice on accessing food

Find more advice on access to food and essential services on the [Unite Against Covid-19 website](#).

General financial support

You may be eligible for financial help from Work and Income for urgent costs like:

- accommodation (rent, board, emergency housing)
- repairing or replacing appliances
- emergency dental treatment
- emergency medical treatment
- health travel costs

You don't need to be on a benefit to get help. You can find out about the supports available for individuals, families, employers and self-employed people affected by COVID-19 by visiting [Work and Income](#) or checking what else you might be eligible for at Work and Income – [Check what you might get](#).

If you're not sure what you might be eligible for, or you'd like to talk to someone about your situation, you can call Work and Income on 0800 559 009.

Work and Income clients

You can use [MyMSD](#) to update your personal details, check your payments and apply for help with things like one-off costs for food. If you still need help, you can call Work and Income on 0800 559 009. More information related to COVID-19 support and changes can be found at [Work and Income](#).

Help for carers

Information for carers can be found at Work and Income - [Carers](#). Please check the webpage regularly for the most up to date information.

Help for carers in paid employment (including self-employed)

COVID-19 Wage Subsidy August 2021

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the government has introduced several COVID-19 Wage Subsidies to support employers and self-employed people, so that they can continue to pay employees and protect jobs.

The Government has said a COVID-19 Wage Subsidy Scheme will be in place if there is an escalation to Alert Levels 3 or 4 anywhere in New Zealand for 7 days or more. The wage subsidy is now for two weeks at a time. If the Government makes further rounds available, businesses need to make a new application for each round.

For more information on COVID-19 Wage Subsidies, including what's currently available, application closing dates, and how to apply if you're an employer or self-employed, visit [Work and Income: COVID-19 Wage Subsidy August 2021](#).

Leave Support Scheme

If you can't work from home and are required to self-isolate because you meet certain health criteria, your employer may be eligible for the Leave Support Scheme to help keep paying you. You can also get the Leave Support Scheme if you're self-employed.

The health criteria for the scheme includes situations where:

- You are the caregiver of a dependant who has been told to self-isolate for a period by a doctor or health official through the National Contact Tracing process, and the dependant needs support to do so safely

- You have household members who are considered “higher risk” if they contract COVID-19 and a doctor has told you to self-isolate (this is to reduce the risk of transmitting the virus to vulnerable household members)

More information can be found at Work and Income - [Leave Support Scheme](#).

Talk to your employer about your situation and whether they may be able to apply for the Leave Support Scheme to help keep paying you.

Short-Term Absence Payment

The COVID-19 Short-Term Absence Payment is available for employers and self-employed people to help pay their employees who can't work from home while they wait for a COVID-19 test result, or who are a parent or caregiver of a dependant who is staying home while waiting for their COVID-19 test results.

Talk to your employer about your situation and whether they may be able to apply for the Short-Term Absence Payment to help keep paying you.

More information can be found at Work and Income – [Short-term absence payment](#).

Keeping up to date

Please keep checking the key government sites for more information on the COVID response: covid19.govt.nz and health.govt.nz.

What other information do you need?

If you have questions or other information you would like to see as a carer please use the links and numbers on this page or get in touch with:

- centre@carers.net.nz
- Carers NZ free on **0800 777 797**
- wecare.kiwi offers practical support for people living on their own or caring for others to help in getting through COVID-19
- Continence NZ – Free Incontinence Help on **0800 650 659**
- Work and Income call free on **0800 559 009**
- carers.strategy@msd.govt.nz
- disability@health.govt.nz
- Healthline COVID-19 enquiries – call free on **0800 358 5453**
- For guidance on any health issues, call Healthline free on **0800 611 116** or contact your local general practice.