

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

21 April 2021

Links to this and more information

The information in this print carers resource from the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Social Development is available online with links to more on each topic at the following sites:

Health - health.govt.nz/covid-19-carers; and MSD - msd.govt.nz/carers-covid-info

The main COVID-19 information sites continue to be covid19.govt.nz; and health.govt.nz

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 how you access 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 carers need at this time. While we will revise this resource as required, things do change, so please regularly check the carers online resource sites and COVID-19 sites at the top of this resource.

COVID-19 Vaccine

COVID-19 vaccines will play a critical role in protecting our health and wellbeing. The COVID-19 vaccine programme is the biggest logistical exercise our health system has ever tackled. There will be enough vaccine for the entire population to be vaccinated - no one will miss out. The vaccine is free.

From March 2021, the priority group for vaccine have been the border frontline health workforce. The focus is now on the sequence for vaccine delivery to other frontline health workforce, including carers, and people at higher risk of getting sick from COVID-19.

Before general public vaccinations begin from July 2021, DHBs and all other providers will use a whānau-centred approach to vaccinate whānau 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 whānau member/s are carers of the person to be vaccinated;
- vaccine supply is sufficient to meet demand;
- the whānau or family member has difficulties 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 on how and when vaccines will be ready, vaccine types, safety and approval, and vaccine updates and resources is available at [covid19.govt.nz/vaccines](https://www.health.govt.nz/vaccines) and [health.govt.nz/covid-vaccine](https://www.health.govt.nz/covid-vaccine) and through this resource at [health.govt.nz/covid-19-carers](https://www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-carers)

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 what this means for you and those you support through this resource at [health.govt.nz/covid-19-carers](https://www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-carers)

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 some of you who are carers. There are simple steps that can be taken to protect you and your family, whānau and āiga.

Good hygiene is very 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; and stay home and seek medical advice if unwell and get a test where necessary. Physical distance from other people who 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 both of 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 about how to protect yourself and others is available through [health.govt.nz/covid-19-carers](https://www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-carers)

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 through this resource at [health.govt.nz/covid-19-carers](https://www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-carers)

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 through this resource at health.govt.nz/covid-19-carers

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.

It is recognised that this approach may be challenging for the people you might care for and for their families, whānau and āiga. People's individual circumstances will be carefully considered in any decision made by the Medical Officer of Health. More information on testing positive and moving to a quarantine facility can be found through this resource at health.govt.nz/covid-19-carers

Face masks and coverings

Wearing a face mask or face covering helps reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 when there are cases in the community. This is one of a range of important actions along with hand hygiene; physical distancing; coughing and sneezing into your elbow; regular cleaning of high touch objects, items and surfaces; and staying home and seeking medical advice if unwell and getting a test where necessary.

All households should have a supply of masks for each household member. Face coverings such as a bandana or a scarf can also be used if you do not have a mask.

Face masks or coverings are mandatory on public transport from Alert Level 1 and above.

The Government has advised that children under 12 years and people with a disability or physical or mental health condition which makes it difficult to wear a face mask or covering will be exempt.

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

More information on face masks and coverings, and how to wear them correctly and safely, can be found through this resource at health.govt.nz/covid-19-carers

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 through this resource at health.govt.nz/covid-19-carers

Caring for older people

You can find information specifically for older people and their families, whānau and āiga during the COVID-19 response through this resource at health.govt.nz/covid-19-carers

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 through this resource at health.govt.nz/covid-19-carers

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 through this resource at health.govt.nz/covid-19-carers

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 through health.govt.nz/covid-19-carers

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 through this resource at health.govt.nz/covid-19-carers

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 through this resource at health.govt.nz/covid-19-carers

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 through this resource at health.govt.nz/covid-19-carers

Welfare and social sector support

Links to this and more information

The welfare and social sector support information in this section of the print carers resource is available online, with links to more on each topic at the following site, msd.govt.nz/carers-covid-info

Access to food and other essentials

Accessing financial assistance to get food

You may be able to get help through Work and Income. You don't need to be an existing Work and Income client to get this help. To learn more, call 0800 559 009 or go to the MSD carers webpage above.

If you can't leave your home to get food

Support may be available to get food delivered if you can't leave your home.

- You can make online orders and arrangements through local supermarkets; or make arrangements with family and friends to pick up food.
- If this is not possible, you can also seek assistance through community groups, food banks, or social service or health providers. You can find contact details for these groups on the Family Services Directory at familyservices.govt.nz/directory

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 more information about financial support at workandincome.govt.nz/covid-19 or check what else you might be eligible for at check.msd.govt.nz

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 at my.msd.govt.nz 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 is available at workandincome.govt.nz/covid-19

Help for carers

Information on carer focused support available from Work and Income can be found at workandincome.govt.nz/eligibility/carers

Please check the webpage regularly for the most up to date information.

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

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 on criteria for the Leave Support Scheme can be found at workandincome.govt.nz/covid-19

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 **workandincome.govt.nz/covid-19**

COVID-19 Wage Subsidies

Over the past year the Government has made several COVID-19 wage subsidies available to support employers and self-employed people, so they can continue to pay employees, including casuals, and protect jobs. The most recent was the two-week COVID-19 Wage Subsidy March 2021. This has now closed.

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.

More information can be found by going to **workandincome.govt.nz/covid-19** and selecting the webpage "COVID-19 payments that have ended".

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 throughout this resource or get in touch with:

- centre@carers.net.nz
- Carers NZ free on 0800 777 797
- 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.