

20<sup>th</sup> May 2020

Primary Care Covid IMT Operations

Dear Primary Healthcare Providers,

## Invitation to participate in targeted community testing

Thank you for continuing to work with our community during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The metro Auckland DHBs are offering testing for COVID-19 to members of your staff as part of the on-going national surveillance against COVID-19.

This testing is for people with no symptoms of COVID-19 and is voluntary. Its purpose is to help provide assurance that there is no undetected transmission of the disease in our community.

This is particularly important as we change the Alert Level in a way that increases the amount of movement in our communities.

Information on the options for testing, how results are communicated, and what happens if a staff member tests positive, are below.

We are carrying out this targeted community testing in Primary Care between Friday 15<sup>th</sup> May and Monday 25<sup>th</sup> May. This testing will occur via CBAC vouchers for testing. It is important that your staff receive the pre-test information sheet to ensure they are able to make informed decisions about whether to be tested. This information is provided with this letter, along with a voucher and list of operational CBACs. **It is important to emphasise they must present only to one of the listed centres, and must bring with them a copy of the voucher.**

Practices who wish to test their own staff may do so but should understand there is no associated funding for this, and must follow specific instructions for completing the eNotifications.

Further information including FAQs are provided below. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns.

Yours Sincerely,

Dr Sarah Hartnall  
Clinical Lead Primary Care Covid IMT Operations

### **Information for your staff**

Your staff will be provided with written information which explains the testing process (attached to with this letter), its purpose, and what happens to the test results, including that results will be communicated with you as their employer. **It is important to emphasise in any communication with them that this is an entirely voluntary process.**

### **Communication of results**

The samples taken from your staff will be sent to LabPlus for testing. Although most results are available within two days, it can take up to five days – these results will be communicated to each individual staff member.

You will be notified if there are any positive results for your staff. Positive results are notified to the Auckland Regional Public Health Service (ARPHS). As part of the national response to COVID-19 information may be also shared with other healthcare organisations including the DHBs and the Ministry of Health, and as needed to enable contact tracing.

### **If your staff member tests positive**

As you consider taking up the offer of staff testing it is important to understand what will happen in the unlikely event that a staff member with no symptoms tests positive for COVID-19. You may want to develop a plan for this possibility.

Auckland Regional Public Health Service (ARPHS) will contact your staff member and advise them to go into self-isolation immediately. ARPHS will stay in contact with your staff member and continue to provide advice until they recover.

ARPHS will also work with you to decide who else is at risk and needs to go into self-isolation and be tested. These are called close contacts. To enable this work, you will need to be able to provide the contact details of staff members who are close contacts, and people who have visited your premises that are also close contacts.

You will be asked about staff movements and the movements of visitors to your premises including rosters, lunch arrangements, and any other activities. You will also need to identify the dates and times of visitors and where they were at your premises.

## Targeted community testing – frequently asked questions

### What is targeted community testing?

- Targeted community testing involves testing selected groups of people for COVID-19 who do not have symptoms.
- It is part of the Ministry of Health’s ongoing surveillance against COVID-19 which helps provide assurance that there is not undetected community transmission. There are very few cases of COVID-19 at this time. It is unlikely that people without symptoms will test positive for COVID-19.
- Targeted testing is important as we move Alert Levels and increase the amount of movement in our communities.
- Over the next few weeks, testing will be offered to groups of healthcare workers and other essential workers.

### Which groups are being targeted for this testing?

- In Auckland, we are offering targeted community testing for groups of healthcare workers and other essential workers.
- For example, we tested more than 400 people shopping at two supermarkets in Auckland – all tested negative for COVID-19.
- We are focused on ensuring we reach Māori and Pacific communities and are also doing targeted testing to check there is not undetected transmission in these communities.

### Are you testing all asymptomatic people in these categories?

- No, the purpose of this targeted community testing is a surveillance activity to provide assurance that there are no undetected cases of COVID-19. For example we are testing some groups of healthcare workers, but not every healthcare worker.

### How is targeted community testing different to testing people who do have COVID-19 symptoms?

- In general, we follow the Ministry of Health case definition for who should be tested. At the moment this is people with respiratory symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 infection; cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, runny nose, loss of sense of smell and fever.
- It is important that people who have symptoms of COVID-19 or who have been in contact with confirmed or probable cases get tested. This is a critical part of preventing the spread of COVID-19 because it helps us find cases early and stop the spread.
- Targeted community testing has a different purpose. It is part of New Zealand’s surveillance testing programme, where testing of a

wider population is undertaken, including people who do not have symptoms, to check there are not undetected cases.

**Should people without symptoms come to community based testing centres (CBACs) or designated general practices to be tested for COVID-19?**

- The Ministry of Health’s case definition is the guide for who should be tested – at the moment this is people with respiratory symptoms suggestive of COVID-19 infection; cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, runny nose, loss of sense of smell and fever.
- We encourage people with these symptoms to come to CBACs or designated general practices for testing.
- We do not encourage people without symptoms to leave their bubbles to seek testing unless they have been directed to do so by public health (for example because they are a close contact of someone with COVID-19) or they are offered testing as part of the surveillance programme.
- Some targeted community surveillance testing over coming weeks will be available through CBACs. This will be arranged through employers and available at designated sites and hours.

**Where can I find more information?**

- For medical advice you can call Healthline on 0800 358 5453 for advice 24/7. Note that Healthline does NOT have access to test results.
- For general help and advice about the COVID-19 situation in New Zealand you can visit [www.covid19.govt.nz](http://www.covid19.govt.nz) or call the free government helpline on 0800 779 997 (8am to 10pm, 7 days a week).
- Information for health professionals can be found at the Ministry of Health website [health.govt.nz/coronavirus](http://health.govt.nz/coronavirus).