

COVID-19 Pre-departure Information from Labtests– For Referrers

The Ministry of Health had advised laboratories and PHOs that COVID exit testing for repatriation to other countries pre-departure will *not be funded by the NZ government* from 22 June 2020. This is a reminder about Pre-departure information for referrers. For Further information see <https://www.labtests.co.nz/2020/06/26/covid-for-referrers/>

People registering for repatriation flights departing NZ will be made aware of any requirements around pre-departure testing by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and airlines.

Test Process

Travellers will contact their medical practice to arrange testing. Payment must be made directly to the medical practice for all associated costs of testing, including the laboratory analysis.

Timeframe for Testing and Results

Pre-departure testing must be requested on or before 72 hours from when the result is required (not flight departure time). If a traveller presents with less than 72 hours before they require their result, they should be aware of the likelihood they will not make their flight.

Payment

The price of the laboratory analysis is \$120 + GST; this must be paid to the medical practice directly. The laboratory will invoice the medical practice for testing as per standard invoicing process.

Clinical Details (please enter this on the e-notification form and lab test form) PRIVATE and the below details

Manual Request Form

Medical practices must include relevant details on the test request form such as “Pre-departure COVID-19 Test”, “Asymptomatic COVID test”, “Clearance”, etc. This allows the laboratory to identify the purpose of testing.

eOrder

If using eOrders, select “Novel Coronavirus” and in funding category select “Patient to pay” (second option as below).

-- Choose one -- Meets Government funding criteria - no charge to patient Patient to pay - Swabbed in medical centre, swabbing and testing fee collected. Please invoice medical centre for lab test fee component \$138 incl GST

Patient Consent

By requesting COVID-19 testing individuals are providing their consent for results to be sent through to the national result repository. This is a Ministry of Health requirement for all notifiable diseases. There is no requirement for a separate consent form to be completed for this purpose.

Further queries

For queries relating to the laboratory testing process please contact info.commercial@healthscope.co.nz

Pre-departure testing can also be found on Auckland Regional HealthPathways

<https://aucklandregion.healthpathways.org.nz>

COVID-19 Requests and Local Processes

- Testing and self-isolation

Patients should not be referred to community laboratory centres for specimen collection.

1. Check if the patient meets the criteria for testing. See also Ministry of Health – [Guidance for Primary and Secondary Care on Essential Groups for Testing](#).
 - [Symptomatic testing](#). SURV code[Ⓔ] may be required.
 - [Asymptomatic testing](#) – including surveillance testing. SURV codes[Ⓔ] are required.
 - [Privately funded testing](#) of asymptomatic people.

Privately funded testing

If a person is seeking other asymptomatic swabbing for exceptional circumstances (e.g., [clearance before leaving New Zealand](#)) they must discuss the process for [privately funded COVID-19 testing](#) with their GP. They should **not** present to a CTC.

Clearance before leaving New Zealand

People who register for repatriation flights leaving New Zealand will be made aware of any pre-departure testing requirements by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) and airlines.

Pre-departure testing needs to be ordered at least 72 hours before the result is required by the general practice providing the result. This will be longer than 72 hours before the flight departs.

With the increasing number of flights leaving New Zealand, it is important to follow the appropriate process for clearance testing departing passengers to ensure results are received in the required timeframe.

For further information, see Labtests – [COVID-19 Pre departure: For Referrers](#).

Message from the Director-General of Health – Ashley Bloomfield

Kia ora Koutou

“The more than 194,000 COVID-19 tests carried out over the past two weeks have been essential in supporting the management and containment of the Auckland cluster.

I’d like to acknowledge Auckland’s healthcare professionals and those working in Managed Isolation Facilities and at the borders who have been particularly busy over recent weeks.

Public information update

The [Unite against COVID-19](#) public information campaign ramped up this past weekend to ensure all New Zealanders are aware of the new Alert Level requirements.

This includes launching a new campaign to encourage the correct use of masks and face coverings. The campaign will use a mix of TV, radio and social media channels, and we’ll also utilise outdoor media and transport locations.

Next week we’ll resume campaign activity on contact tracing. This will be aimed at overcoming social resistance to get people on board with changing their behaviours to support effective contact tracing

Maintaining vigilance through increased community and border testing

This week we published a [step-by-step guide to what happens when someone tests positive for COVID-19](#) (right from getting tested, receiving their results and moving into quarantine), and I encourage you to share this with anyone curious about the finer details of this process.

We continue to focus on testing and will work with DHBs, PHUs and communities to support the delivery of around 70,000 tests across New Zealand across the next week.

It is estimated this will be split into approximately 70% of tests a day occurring in Auckland (7,000 tests a day) and 30% occurring across the rest of New Zealand (3,000 tests a day).

These will include the routine tests completed on guests in managed isolation facilities, further testing of border and managed isolation facilities workers, and the usual testing of symptomatic people in the community. We are working closely with Māori and Pacific health providers and will be making a concerted effort to ensure high testing rates in South Auckland.

I have written to employers of border workforce groups to inform them we will re-test those who work at the border within the next 2 weeks, as part of our precautionary approach.

Border workforce groups will then continue to be tested on an ongoing basis as part of our long-term testing strategy. The frequency of this routine testing will be determined by exposure risk and based on public health guidance.

Day 12 testing for close contacts

I'd like to draw your attention to an additional measure the Ministry is taking to provide further assurance that close contacts of identified cases do not present a risk to their family, community or workplace at the end of their self-isolation period.

We now recommend that all COVID-19 close contacts are tested on around day 12 of their 14-day self-isolation period. This includes all household close contacts, and any others determined by the local Medical Officer of Health (such as when there are multiple cases at an institution or work premises).

While day 12 testing is strongly encouraged for all close contacts, it will not be a requirement unless there are specific grounds for public health concern.

The sector has worked incredibly hard to enable access to testing over the past month, which I acknowledge and thank you for. I ask that you to continue making testing easily available for the border workforce around the country. As always testing should be free, with costs coded in line with previous Ministry advice.

Looking after the mental health and wellbeing of New Zealanders

COVID-19 and the challenges associated with stamping out this virus are having an impact on peoples’ mental health and wellbeing. It’s a stressful time for many, so it’s important to know there are ways we can take care of ourselves and each other.

Our psychosocial response plan, [Kia Kaha, Kia Māia, Kia Ora Aotearoa: COVID-19 Psychosocial and Mental Wellbeing Recovery Plan](#) is available online, and helping people stay well is at the heart of the plan. If we all act now and take practical, proactive steps to look after our mental wellbeing, we can reduce the likelihood of more severe impacts further down the track. We have funded a number of free apps, [online resources and self-help tools](#) to help people look after their wellbeing, and many have free data as part of our sponsored data programme.

I encourage you to please update your clients and community regularly about where help is by sharing and promoting these resources, and the free helpline 1737.

Health Care New Zealand also provides a free counselling service for frontline health care professionals and care workers seeking mental health and wellbeing support. This confidential service can be accessed by calling 0800 820 080 to make an appointment with an experienced therapist.

It’s really important we look after ourselves first so that we are able to look after others, so please use this support line if you need help.

Aged Residential Care

I'd like to acknowledge the work by Aged Residential Care providers to protect their vulnerable residents and support their families and whānau.

When the Auckland COVID-19 outbreak was discovered earlier this month, we worked closely with the Aged Care Association (ACA) to ensure that all aged residential facilities went into Alert Level 3 lockdown nationwide, meaning staff could not work in multiple locations and the public were restricted from visiting loved ones, to keep them safe.

Last week, we updated our [advice for people visiting Aged Residential Care facilities under each Alert Level](#). The updated advice eases the previous restrictions and allows greater scope for whānau and family visits, which we know will be of great comfort to many people.

We've also lifted restrictions of staff movements across and within facilities for ARC facilities outside the Auckland region, which can now operate at Alert Level 2 unless advised otherwise by the local Medical Officer of Health.

Where ARC staff are employed across multiple sites/roles, our advice states there must be plans in place to follow basic hygiene measures, PPE guidance and standard IPC precautions to reduce the risk of transmissions between settings.

NZ COVID Tracer app and QR codes

It's now mandatory for businesses and services – including health providers – to display official QR code posters to help New Zealanders keep track of their movements with the NZ COVID Tracer app. From 11.59pm 3 September public transport and taxi services will also need to display a QR code.

Over 1.8 million Kiwis are now registered with the app, more than 318,000 QR codes are on display around the country, and the codes are being scanned well over a million times a day.

The Ministry has received some feedback that QR codes are not always displayed in an accessible way. Please take a minute to make sure your QR codes are placed in suitable locations and are [easy for everyone to reach](#). Remember you can print out more than one copy of each poster if required.

If you still haven't got your QR codes for any reason, please visit our [self-service portal](#) to get it sorted – it's easy and only takes a few minutes. If you need any help, please don't hesitate to get in touch with our support team at help@covidtracer.min.health.nz or by calling 0800 800 606.

Contact Tracing report released

The Minister of Health has released the final report of the Contact Tracing Assurance Committee (CTAC), led by Sir Brian Roche. The Committee was tasked with reviewing progress against the recommendations of the earlier Verrall report.

The report confirms that the Ministry has met the recommendations of the Verrall report and contact tracing in New Zealand is in an increasingly strong position. While there will always be room for improvement, the Ministry is pleased with what has already been achieved to ensure that New Zealand maintains a gold-standard in contact tracing.

Our experience around the current Auckland outbreak also demonstrates the progress our contact tracing service, and the people working in it, have made.

The CTAC report, the Ministry's latest Indicator Report, and related health reports to the Minister are available [on our website](#). Thank you to you and your teams for your continued support in helping to eliminate COVID-19, together.

Nga mihi nui"

Dr Ashley Bloomfield

Director-General of Health

Covid-19 eNotification paper Form – immigration status

The Ministry of Health has given communities reassurance that immigration status is not relevant to Covid-19 assessment and management.

You will be aware that immigration status is still included in the paper version of the eNotification Form. As a reminder please ensure that this question is struck from the form and immigration is not asked during Covid-19 related consultations. We do not want peoples' fear of any repercussions because of their immigration status to stop them from coming forward to be tested. This could compromise our public health response.

A new version of eNotification is under development and will be released in due course. Many thanks for your support.

For feedback: Stuart.Jenkins@waitematadhb.govt.nz

Aged Residential Care staff testing underway

Aged residential care staff have been identified as a key group for community surveillance testing. On 28th August, MoH communications were sent to ARC facilities encouraging them to offer asymptomatic testing to their staff members. This is anticipated to be primarily through Community Testing Centres (CTCs), but some facilities may engage with their usual primary care provider to offer testing onsite. Staff can also attend general practice or urgent care for testing.

If you choose to offer an ARC staff swabbing service an electronic printed label with full name, DOB, phone number and validated NHI, and a lab form with code 'SURV-ARC' are required. Incorrectly labelled specimens will result in a recollect request from the laboratory. Every swab must be accompanied by an e-notification that will also generate a POAC payment.