

COVID-19



Kia ora koutou

This week the number of COVID-19 tests passed the one million mark, almost 8 months after Crown Research Institute ESR processed the very first test.

This is an extraordinary milestone in New Zealand's response to the pandemic.

My sincere thanks to all the lab workers, who process the tests in very short turnaround times and those on the front line who have carried out tests across all our assessment centres, testing station and medical centres.

This work has been critical part of New Zealand's response and will continue to play an important role.



Director-General of Health,
Dr Ashley Bloomfield

Medicines

With continuing pressures on manufacture and supply internationally resulting from COVID-19, the availability of some medicines in New Zealand is still changing frequently.

You can keep up with which medicines and devices have supply issues through the [PHARMAC website](#). At this stage, we still have secure supplies of the vast majority of medicines.

Please encourage patients to take prescribed medicines as directed rather than stockpiling, even if it means they're on shorter dispensing cycles.





vote.nz



Keeping safe during the General Election

The Ministry of Health is working closely with the Electoral Commission to ensure there are a range of measures in place to keep you and those around you safe from COVID-19. There are easy steps you can take, to protect yourself and your whānau when you are voting:

- remember to scan into your voting place with the NZ COVID Tracer app
- use the provided hand sanitiser on your way in and out of the voting place
- bring your own pen to mark your voting paper, if you can
- try to keep your distance from people you don't know inside the voting place – even if we're at Alert Level 1.

This year there are more voting places open to reduce queues. You are encouraged to vote locally if you can. If you need to stay home, there are other ways of voting including voting by post. Find out more, enrol to vote and find a voting place at [Vote.nz](https://www.vote.nz)

Report on COVID-19 cases in health care and support workers

During the first wave of COVID-19, we reported 167 cases of COVID-19 in health care and support workers in New Zealand, which was around 11% of cases.

A new report published by the Ministry of Health shows that 57% of these cases (or 96 of the total 167) were likely to have been infected in the workplace. Of these, 62.5% worked in aged residential care, 27% worked in a hospital and 10.4% worked in the community. Most of these cases were part of a cluster.

The World Health Organization has reported that approximately 14% of COVID-19 cases reported globally were health workers. In some countries, this was as high as 35%. While our proportion of health care workers infected (11%) is lower than many other countries, the report has reinforced how important it is to protect our health workers and the people they work, live and interact with.

We will continue to work closely with the health sector to strengthen these protections as part of our COVID-19 response. For more information, you can download the report from the [website](#).

Growing our swabbing workforce: educational module now online

Testing is a core part of New Zealand's COVID-19 elimination strategy: by identifying cases, we can stamp the virus out before it has a chance to spread widely.

Careerforce, an Industry Training Organisation, has developed an online module to support the upskilling of alternative healthcare workers (e.g. Kaiāwhina) to perform COVID-19 swabbing under supervision. The module was developed collaboratively with stakeholders across the health and disability sector and is based on existing content from healthcare providers.

By supporting the upskilling of additional workers to perform COVID-19 swabbing, we can reduce our current over-reliance on registered nurses, help build a more sustainable staffing model for testing, and support a strong response plan for any potential future outbreaks.

The module is [now hosted on our website](#) as an optional resource for employers to use. The module supports one element of the three-part swabbing training process, which also includes practical training and a practical assessment carried out by the employer, as part of surging the COVID-19 testing workforce.



Ngā mihi nui

Dr Ashley Bloomfield
Director-General of Health