

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Information for close contacts of a confirmed case

You have been identified as having had close contact with someone who has been diagnosed with novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

What you need to know

- As you have been near a person who has the virus, there is a possibility you may become unwell. To protect yourself and others, you are required to **self-isolate** (stay at home) for 14 days from the date you last had contact with the infected person.
- New Zealand is currently at [Alert Level 4](#). This means that *all* New Zealanders, except those working in essential services, must also stay at home and not interact with others outside of their households. This means that **even after your self-isolation ends, you must continue to stay at home.**
- Even though [Alert Level 4](#) means people can still go out to places like pharmacies and supermarkets for essential supplies, **you will not be able to do this until you have completed your 14-day self-isolation period. If you DO develop COVID-19, you will not be able to go out for essential supplies until after the end of your isolation period AND you are cleared to do so by the health professional doing your daily health and wellbeing checks.**
- In most cases the virus causes mild to moderate symptoms. However, some people do develop pneumonia and severe respiratory illness.

If you become unwell

Free phone Healthline on [0800 358 5453](tel:08003585453), or call your GP if you begin to feel unwell. Tell them you are a close contact of someone who has COVID-19. The symptoms are:

- Fever, chills or sweats
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing, shortness of breath.

If you become severely unwell or have difficulty breathing, please call an ambulance on 111 and tell them you are a close contact of someone confirmed as having COVID-19.

What does [self-isolating](#) (staying at home) mean?

Self-isolation is a precautionary measure to protect those around you from possibly contracting COVID-19 if you develop it. Staying at home, away from others, is an effective measure of prevention.

Please minimise close contact with others living in your home by avoiding face-to-face contact closer than 2 metres for longer than 15 minutes.

If you want to speak to someone outside your household, use the phone or other means of contact. You should not go out for essential supplies. Arrange for friends, family or delivery drivers to drop off food and supplies outside your door.

Do not go to hospital to visit people, for outpatient appointments, or for surgery unless you need urgent hospital care. Call the hospital if you need to reschedule any appointments.

Living with others

While you self-isolate, try to separate yourself from the people you live with. Minimise close contact with household members, avoiding face-to-face contact closer than 2 metres for longer than 15 minutes.

You should not share food and drinks. Someone in your home can prepare your food, but you should not prepare food for others.

Use your own toothbrush, eating and drinking utensils (including cups and glasses in the bedroom and bathroom), serving utensils, dishes, pillows, bed linen or other items.

Wash all these items thoroughly after use with detergent and water, and wash your clothing and dishes separate to others in your home.

If you have one, use a dishwasher to clean and dry your used crockery and cutlery. If this is not possible, wash them using washing up liquid and warm water and dry them thoroughly, remembering to use a separate tea towel.

Make sure you use separate towels from other people in your house, both for drying yourself after bathing or showering, and for hand-hygiene purposes. Remind the people you live with to use their own towels.

You should also use your own toilet paper, toothpaste and other personal supplies during your self-isolation period.

Use of shared spaces at home

Do not share a bed with others. You should avoid sleeping in a common area while self-isolating. Minimise the time you spend in shared spaces such as bathrooms, kitchens and sitting rooms, and keep shared spaces well ventilated. [Clean all surfaces](#), like kitchen benches and sink-tops after you use them, and avoid touching them after you have cleaned them.

If you use a shared toilet and bathroom, make sure you clean the rooms every time after you use them (e.g. [wiping surfaces](#) you have been in contact with). You may wish to be the last to shower/bath in the morning or evening to make this easier on those you live with. If you share a kitchen, avoid using it while others are present. Take your meals back to your room to eat. It may be easier for someone else in your household to prepare your food, so you can avoid the kitchen area as much as possible.

Ensure you clean communal computer keyboards, desks and all other [household surfaces](#) regularly, especially before others use them.

We understand that it will be difficult for some people to separate themselves from others at home, particularly those with young children and large families. You should do your very best to follow this guidance and everyone in your household should regularly wash their hands, avoid touching their face and clean frequently touched surfaces.

Practise good hygiene to protect others

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or cough/sneeze into the crook of your elbow. Throw used tissues into a lined rubbish bin, and immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, making sure you dry them thoroughly. You can also use a hand sanitiser if soap and water are not available.

Through the day, wash your hands often and thoroughly with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, or use a hand sanitiser. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands. If you have a carer, they should use disposable tissues to wipe away any mucus or phlegm after you have sneezed or coughed. The carer should then wash their hands.

Facemasks are not recommended as an effective means of preventing the spread of infection. They play an important role in clinical settings, such as hospitals, but there's very little evidence of benefit from their use outside of these settings.

Living with children

If the child has not been identified as a close contact of the person diagnosed with COVID-19, they need only adhere to the requirements of Alert level 4. You should reduce your close contact with all children in your home, but we understand that may not be possible, especially with young children.

So far we have seen that children with COVID-19 appear to be less severely affected, however, it is important to do your best to follow this guidance.

Explain to your children what is happening in a way that is easy to understand. Remind them you are not sick and tell them you are self-isolating to protect other people. Try to avoid worrying children.

If a child develops symptoms, free phone Healthline on [0800 358 5453](tel:08003585453), or call their GP. They will also need to self-isolate until 48 hours after they become symptom-free **AND** receive clearance from the health professional doing their daily health and wellbeing checks, **AND** then remain at home under the conditions of Alert Level 4.

Breastfeeding while self-isolating

There is currently no clinical evidence to suggest that COVID-19 can be transmitted through breast milk. The virus can be spread to the baby in the same way as to anyone in close contact with an infected person. The benefits of breastfeeding outweigh any potential risks of transmission by being in close contact with your baby, but this will be an individual decision and can be discussed with your midwife or GP by telephone.

If you wish to breastfeed, limit the potential spread of COVID-19 to the baby by:

- washing your hands before touching the baby, breast pump or bottles
- avoiding coughing or sneezing on the baby while breastfeeding
- cleaning breast pumps, as recommended by the manufacturer, after each use
- considering asking someone who is well to feed expressed breast milk to the baby

If you are feeding with formula or expressed milk, sterilise the equipment carefully before each use. You should not share bottles or a breast pump with someone else.

Find more information at the [Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists website](#).

Living with an older or vulnerable person

If you live with an elderly or vulnerable person (person who is immune compromised or with co-orbidities, e.g. cardiovascular disease, diabetes or hypertension), and if the person has not been identified as a close contact of the person diagnosed with COVID-19, they can continue their normal activities. You should reduce your close contact with the person, but we understand that may be difficult. If the person develops symptoms, free phone Healthline on 0800 358 5453, or call their GP.

Getting food and medicine

Where possible, ask a friend or family member – or use supermarket or other delivery services – to drop off groceries, meals or medications. Ask others to carry out errands, like supermarket shopping, on your behalf.

Make sure any deliveries are left outside your home for you to collect. Many New Zealand companies are now offering a ‘contactless’ delivery option, where they notify you when



they have delivered your order, but remain nearby to ensure you receive it.

Doing laundry

To limit the possibility of dispersing the virus through the air, do not shake dirty laundry. If living with other people, ask someone else to fold and put away common laundry items (such as towels and tea towels) and provide a supply for you. You should fold and put away your own laundry items. Do not ask others to do your laundry.

If you do not have a washing machine, wait until 72 hours after your 14-day self-isolation period – and only if you are well and haven't developed COVID-19 - before taking your laundry to a laundrette.

Transport

As a close contact of someone diagnosed with COVID-19 you cannot use public transport, taxis or similar transport methods during your 14-day self-isolation period.

Even after your self-isolation period ends, due to New Zealand's Alert Level 4 there are heavy restrictions on transport and travel.

Right now, public transport and domestic air travel is restricted to travel for medical reasons, to get to the supermarket, to those involved in essential services and freight.

Air travel is permitted in some cases for people to leave the country and to get home to self-isolate.

Ferry services, road and rail will still be available for the transport of essential goods.

After your self-isolation period ends – and only if you are well and haven't developed COVID-19 - you can use your own transport means (car, bike etc) when you need to access essential services. Self-isolation is about staying home and limiting travel.

Using temporary accommodation for self-isolation

Visit the COVID-19 website – www.covid19.govt.nz for [more information](#) on this.

Taking care of your mental health and wellbeing

Your emotional and mental health is important. It is normal to feel stressed or lonely when self-isolating, but there are some things you can do to feel better. The Ministry of Health website has [advice for managing your mental wellbeing and taking care of children](#).

Reach out to your supports, like family and friends, and talk about how you feel. We also recommend sticking to a routine, such as regular mealtimes, bedtimes and exercising.

If you feel you are not coping, it is important to talk with a health professional. Call or text

1737 to talk with a trained counsellor. The service is free and operates 24/7.

Things you can do to make self-isolating easier

Self-isolating may be difficult, but there are things you can do to make it easier:

- Plan how you can get access to food and other supplies, such as medications
- Ask friends or family to drop off supplies, or order supplies online
- Keep in touch with friends and family over the phone or via other means of contact
- Look for online classes or courses to help you take light exercise in your home
- You can go outside, but you need to avoid contact with others
- You can live with others, but you need to avoid close contact with them, including not sharing beds, linen, or food and drinks
- Stay in a well-ventilated room. Try to keep a window open as much as possible to enable ventilation and airflow to help keep clean air moving through your room.

Helping a child who has to self-isolate

If your child has to self-isolate, there are things you can do to help them:

- Reassure them that they are safe and encourage them to talk about how they feel
- Encourage them to ask questions, and answer in plain, age-appropriate language
- Be understanding – they may have trouble sleeping, be upset and need extra care
- Children look to their parents/guardians to feel safe and to know how to respond; reassure them and let them know you will all be fine
- Try to keep to normal routines – e.g. mealtimes and bedtimes.

You can also access professional help for children who are self-isolating. If a child's distress escalates or they display worrying behaviours, such as withdrawal, seek help early. You can call Healthline on 0800 358 5453 or call or text 1737 for mental wellbeing support.

Accessing financial support

Visit www.covid19.govt.nz website for information on the support available.

MORE INFORMATION:

Visit:

- www.covid19.govt.nz

Call:

- **Healthline: 0800 358 5453.** This line operates 24/7 and has interpreters available.
- **0800 Government (0800 779 997)** for all non-health related COVID-19 questions. This line operates from 8am to 1am, seven days.
- **In an emergency, dial 111 for an ambulance.** Tell the phone operator you're a close contact of someone confirmed as having COVID-19.