



Auckland Regional Public Health Service

Ratonga Hauora-ā-Iwi o Tāmaki Makaurau



COVID-19

Auckland Regional Public Health Service

Outbreak Communications

Template Pack for Aged Residential Care facilities

-July 2020 -

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Letter copy for: FAMILY MEMBER – CASUAL CONTACT

REMOVE red text before sending and fill in highlighted sections

AUCKLAND REGIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE WILL WORK WITH YOU TO FINALISE THIS LETTER

DATE

Dear family member,

COVID-19

Auckland Regional Public Health Service has confirmed that a (staff member OR resident) at (facility) has been diagnosed with COVID-19. This person is now in self-isolation (at home OR at facility).

We are working with (facility), and the affected person, and consider your family member to be only a casual contact of the case.

What does being a casual contact mean?

Casual contacts have had limited contact with the affected person or people. **Your family member is at low risk of becoming unwell with this virus.**

However, while they are not considered a close contact, there is still a small possibility that they may have been infected. In most cases, COVID-19 causes mild to moderate symptoms, although some people do develop pneumonia and severe respiratory illness.

As a precaution, all residents' health will be monitored and we have asked that your family member also watch for the following symptoms if they are able. It can take up to 14 days for these symptoms to develop:

- Fever
- New or worsening cough
- Loss of sense of smell
- Runny nose
- Difficulty breathing
- Sore throat

Visitors

(Visitor restrictions are in place during Alert Level # OR It will not be possible for family and friends to visit your family member while they are in isolation OR outline current visitor policy). While we understand this is a worrying time for you, it is important – for everyone's health and safety – that the number of people entering and leaving places like aged residential care facilities remains limited. (Facility) staff will help you to stay engaged and connected with your family member.

If you know the person or persons affected by COVID-19, please do not post any information identifying them on social or other media as this can lead to bullying and/or online abuse.

What happens next?

The affected person, and other staff and residents who are considered close contacts, are now in isolation. They will be staying away from others until they have completed their isolation period and are well.

Aside from watching for symptoms, your family member does not need to do anything else at this time, except keep adhering to the requirements of any [national alert level](#) currently in place, and practise good [cough, sneeze](#) and [hand hygiene](#).

More information

More information about COVID-19 is also available at www.covid19.govt.nz, or by calling the dedicated, 24/7 Healthline number: 0800 358 5453.

Regards,

Medical Officer of Health
Auckland Regional Public Health Service



Letter copy for: STAFF MEMBER – CASUAL CONTACT

REMOVE red text before sending and fill in highlighted sections

AUCKLAND REGIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE WILL WORK WITH YOU TO FINALISE THIS LETTER

DATE

Dear staff member,

COVID-19

Auckland Regional Public Health Service has confirmed that a (staff member OR resident) at (facility) has been diagnosed with COVID-19. This person is now in self-isolation at (home OR facility).

As a result of our investigations, we consider you to be only a casual contact of one of the cases.

What does being a casual contact mean?

Casual contacts have had limited contact with an affected person or people, **so you are at low risk of becoming unwell with the virus.**

What happens next?

While you are not considered a close contact, there is still a small possibility that you may become infected. In most cases, COVID-19 causes mild to moderate symptoms. However, some people do develop pneumonia and severe respiratory illness.

For now, you can continue going to work but, as a precaution, you should watch for the following symptoms over the next 14 days:

- Fever
- New or worsening cough
- Runny nose
- Loss of sense of smell
- Difficulty breathing
- Sore throat

If you start experiencing any of these symptoms, you should let your manager know, and immediately self-isolate at home. Call your doctor, or Healthline (0800 358 5453), for advice. Healthline is free, operates 24/7 and has interpreters available. Seek urgent medical attention if you have difficulty breathing, as this can be a sign of pneumonia.

Should you need to self-isolate, information about how to do this effectively is available on the following pages. And more information is also available at: www.covid19.govt.nz.

If you know the affected person, please do not post any information identifying them on social or other media as this can lead to bullying and/or online abuse.

20 July 2020

We understand this may be a worrying time. Thank you for being vigilant and for the important role you are playing during this COVID-19 outbreak as a healthcare worker.

Regards,

Medical Officer of Health
Auckland Regional Public Health Service

20 July 2020



Letter text for: FAMILY MEMBER – CLOSE CONTACT

REMOVE red text before sending and fill in highlighted sections

AUCKLAND REGIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE WILL WORK WITH YOU TO FINALISE THIS LETTER

DATE

Dear family member,

COVID-19

Auckland Regional Public Health Service has confirmed that a (staff member OR resident) at (facility) has been diagnosed with COVID-19. This person is now in self-isolation (at home OR at facility).

We are working with (facility) and the affected person, and consider your family member to be a close contact of the case.

What does being a close contact mean?

For people who are close contacts of a confirmed or probable case, there is a chance that they may also become unwell. To protect your family member, and others, it's now important that they remain in self-isolation, away from others, **until at least (DATE), inclusive**. This is because it can take up to 14 days to start showing symptoms of COVID-19. If they do develop symptoms, they will need to stay in self-isolation for longer. Auckland Regional Public Health Service will advise when they are clear to leave self-isolation.

Please be assured that the staff will give your family member the care and support they need, whether they remain at (facility) or are moved to (nearest hospital i.e. Auckland City Hospital).

Staff members will now need to wear a gown, gloves, mask and eye protection when they care for your family member. Your family member should not to be alarmed by this; these items are important to protect the staff member and help prevent the potential spread of the virus to others.

If your family member starts to feel unwell

For most people, COVID-19 causes mild to moderate illness, but some people do develop pneumonia and severe respiratory illness. Auckland Regional Public Health Service and (facility) staff will be monitoring your family member's health. Your relative has also been asked to watch for the following symptoms if they are able:

- Fever
- New or worsening cough
- Loss of sense of smell
- Runny nose
- Difficulty breathing
- Sore throat

We have asked your family member to let a staff member know if they start experiencing any of these symptoms, especially if they have difficulty breathing, as this can be a sign of pneumonia.

Visitors

20 July 2020

While we understand this is a worrying time for you, it is important – for everyone’s health and safety – that the number of people entering and leaving places like aged residential care facilities remains limited. (Facility) staff will help you to stay engaged and connected with your family member.

If you know the person or persons affected by COVID-19, please do not post any information identifying them on social or other media as this can lead to bullying and/or online abuse.

More information

More information is also available at www.covid19.govt.nz, or by calling the dedicated, 24/7 Healthline number: 0800 358 5453 (interpreters are available).

Regards,

Medical Officer of Health
Auckland Regional Public Health Service



Letter text for: FAMILY MEMBER – RESIDENT IS A CONFIRMED OR PROBABLE CASE REMOVE red text before sending and fill in highlighted sections
AUCKLAND REGIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE WILL WORK WITH YOU TO FINALISE THIS LETTER

DATE

Dear family member,

COVID-19

Auckland Regional Public Health Service has confirmed that your family member at (facility) (has been diagnosed with COVID-19 OR is a probable case of COVID-19). They are now in self-isolation at (facility).

A probable case means a doctor believes that, due to their symptoms and clinical history, your family member is more likely to have COVID-19 than any other illness – even if they have returned a negative test result.

Please be assured we are monitoring your family member’s health closely. (Facility) staff are there to give your family member the care and support they need, whether they remain at (facility) or are moved to (nearest hospital i.e. Auckland City Hospital).

To protect your family member, and others, it’s now important that they remain in self-isolation, away from others, **until at least (DATE), inclusive.**

Visitors

While we understand this is a worrying time for you, it is important – for everyone’s health and safety – that the number of people entering and leaving places like aged residential care facilities remains limited. (Facility) staff will help you to stay engaged and connected with your family member.

If you know the person or persons affected by COVID-19, please do not post any information identifying them on social or other media as this can lead to bullying and/or online abuse.

More information

More information is also available at www.covid19.govt.nz, or by calling the dedicated, 24/7 Healthline number: 0800 358 5453 (interpreters are available).

Regards,

Medical Officer of Health
Auckland Regional Public Health Service



Letter text for: ALL RESIDENTS' FAMILIES – CONFIRMED OR PROBABLE CASE AT FACILITY REMOVE red text before sending and fill in highlighted sections

DATE

Dear family member,

I am writing to let you know that one of our (staff members OR residents) is considered to be a (probable* OR confirmed) case of COVID-19.

I know this will be worrying, but please be assured that we are working closely with (relevant DHB) and Auckland Regional Public Health Service to assess and manage the situation.

(Relevant DHB) is advising on appropriate infection prevention and control measures, including isolation, and Auckland Regional Public Health Service has begun contact tracing.

Auckland DHB and ARPHS will advise us of the next steps for your family member based on the contact tracing, and the test results. You will be updated as soon as possible about those steps.

In the meantime, there is some general information on the COVID-19 page of the [Auckland Regional Public Health Service](http://www.arphs.health.nz) website (www.arphs.health.nz) - and also on the government's www.covid19.govt.nz website - which you may find helpful.

Kind regards,

[Rest home management]

** Being a PROBABLE case means a person is likely to have had, or currently has, COVID-19. A person who is considered a 'probable' case may have returned a negative result, but still be considered to have had the illness because of their symptoms and/or exposure to the COVID-19 virus.*



Text for: RESIDENTS' FAMILIES – TESTING EVERYONE
[REMOVE red text before sending and fill in or edit highlighted sections]
Distribute with FAQ document.

DATE

Dear family member,

I am writing to let you know that one of our (staff members OR residents) is considered to be a (probable* OR confirmed) case of COVID-19.

I know this will be worrying, but please be assured that we are working closely with (Relevant District Health Board) and Auckland Regional Public Health Service to assess and manage the situation.

As a precautionary measure all of our residents and staff have today been tested for COVID-19, including your family member.

(Relevant DHB) is advising on appropriate infection prevention and control measures, including isolation, and Auckland Regional Public Health Service has begun contact tracing.

(Relevant DHB) and ARPHS will advise us of the next steps for your family member based on the contact tracing, and the test results. You will be updated as soon as possible about those steps.

In the meantime, there is some general information on the COVID-19 page of the [Auckland Regional Public Health Service](http://www.arphs.health.nz) website (www.arphs.health.nz) - and also on the government's www.covid19.govt.nz website - which you may find helpful.

Kind regards,

[Rest home management]

*** Being a PROBABLE case means a person is likely to have had, or currently has, COVID-19. A person who is considered a 'probable' case may have returned a negative result, but still be considered to have had the illness because of their symptoms and/or exposure to the COVID-19 virus.**

COVID-19 in Aged Residential Care Communities

Frequently asked questions for RESIDENTS and FAMILY MEMBERS

Due to the risk COVID-19 poses to older people and those with pre-existing health conditions, residential care facilities are on high alert for COVID-19 and are looking for early signs of the illness.

When will my relative be tested?

Any resident who has any of the symptoms of COVID-19 – new or worsening cough, fever, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose, loss of smell - will be considered a suspect case, and will be tested and kept in self-isolation.

A resident may also be tested if they:

- Are unwell with other symptoms such as headache, fatigue, loss of appetite or diarrhoea.
- Have been in contact with a person infectious with COVID-19.

If there are a number of cases of COVID-19 in the facility - or linked to the facility through, for example, family members - then residents and staff members may be tested as a precaution.

What is the test for COVID-19?

The laboratory test for COVID-19 involves a swab of the nose or throat, which can be uncomfortable but not painful. Residents will be swabbed in the residential care facility. The results may take a few days, with the results sent back to the facility's medical team. A video of a test is [here](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DVJNWefmHjE&feature=youtu.be):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DVJNWefmHjE&feature=youtu.be>

As a family member, the facility will tell you when your relative is swabbed, and then tell you the result. A negative result does not necessarily mean your relative does not have COVID-19 (see *Does a negative test result mean my relative does not have COVID-19?* below). [Information about negative COVID-19 test results](#) is also available on Auckland Regional Public Health Service's COVID-19 webpage.

What does it mean if my relative is a CONFIRMED case?

A CONFIRMED case is someone who has a diagnosis of COVID-19 confirmed by a laboratory test. People confirmed with COVID-19 must self-isolate for ten days from when their symptoms started AND 72 hours after their symptoms ended – whichever is longest. Auckland Regional Public Health Service will confirm the exact day they can leave self-isolation.

The staff, residents and any family or visitors your relative has been close to while infectious also need to stay home in self-isolation.

Staff will now be using full personal protective equipment (PPE) including masks, gowns and goggles when they care for your relative. This may be worrying for your relative, but they will receive the same level of care and support.

What does it mean if my relative is a PROBABLE case?

A doctor may consider your relative a PROBABLE case, even if they have returned a negative test result. This is because their symptoms and clinical history (for example, exposure to someone with the virus) indicate they are more likely to have had, or currently have, COVID-19 than any other illness.

A negative result can occur when not enough virus is present at the time of testing, or because it is either too early or too late in the illness. Having some symptoms and being close to someone in a residential care facility who has the illness may mean your relative has still been infected.

The same action is taken for both PROBABLE and CONFIRMED cases (see above). Your relative will go into isolation in their room, and their close contacts will also go into self-isolation.

Staff will now be using full personal protective equipment (PPE) including mask, gown and goggles when they care for your relative. This may be worrying for your relative, but they will receive the same level of care and support.

Does a negative test result mean my relative does not have COVID-19?

The majority of people with a negative test can be reassured that they do not have COVID-19. However, health professionals will remain alert to the possibility that this may not always be a 'true' negative (see Probable Case information above).

Regardless of the test result, staff will continue to check all residents who are close contacts for symptoms. There will be a rapid assessment of anyone who becomes unwell.

Depending on the symptoms, your relative may need to stay in their room if they are even mildly unwell, as a precaution. They may also be tested again.

My relative is a close contact of someone with COVID-19. Are they at risk?

If your relative has been in close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19, there is a small possibility they have been infected with the virus. Close contacts are required to self-isolate in case they develop the disease and its spread to others. People may potentially be infectious from 48 hours before they develop any symptoms.

People considered close contacts will be in self-isolation for 14-days from the time they last had contact with the infected person – longer if they develop symptoms. This means they will not be able to leave their room at any time. They can still talk to you on the phone.

Staff will now be using full personal protective equipment (PPE) including gowns, masks and goggles. Please reassure your relative that this is a precaution and does not necessarily mean they are developing COVID-19.

What is being done to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in aged care facilities?

Staff are wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) to help prevent the spread of the illness. They must also adhere to District Health Board guidelines for infection prevention and control, including

additional cleaning and hand washing measures. Residents will be checked daily for any symptoms including a fever.

Residents and staff members will be in self-isolation if they have returned from overseas, or been in contact with a COVID-19 case. Anyone unwell with **any illness**, no matter how mild, and regardless of symptoms, will be required to stay in their rooms in self-isolation.

Physical distancing, where this is possible, is also important to help reduce the risk of the virus spreading.

More information: www.covid19.govt.nz

COVID-19 in Aged Residential Care Communities

Frequently asked questions – STAFF

Due to the risk COVID-19 poses to older people and those with pre-existing health conditions, residential care facilities are on high alert for COVID-19 and are looking for early signs of the illness.

Any staff member who has symptoms of respiratory illness will be considered a suspect case, sent home to stay in self-isolation and asked to be tested.

Aged care facilities will also be watching residents and staff for a wide range of symptoms, which may be COVID-19. As well as the key signs – new or worsening cough, fever, shortness of breath, sore throat, a runny nose and a loss of smell – any other symptoms such as headache, fatigue, loss of appetite and diarrhoea will be treated as possible COVID-19, and the person isolated and tested. Facilities will also be on alert for other illnesses that might cause these symptoms.

Will I be tested?

If you have symptoms, you will be tested. You may also be tested if you have been in contact with someone with the virus, or because there is an outbreak of COVID-19 at the facility.

What does it mean if I am a CONFIRMED case?

A CONFIRMED case is someone who has a diagnosis of COVID-19 confirmed by a laboratory test. People confirmed with COVID-19 must self-isolate for ten days from when their symptoms started AND 72 hours after their symptoms ended – whichever is longest. Auckland Regional Public Health Service will confirm the exact day you can leave self-isolation. Any people you have been close to while you were infectious also need to stay home in self-isolation.

What does it mean if I am a PROBABLE case?

A doctor may consider your relative a PROBABLE case, even if they have returned a negative test result. This is because their symptoms and clinical history (for example, exposure to someone with the virus) indicate they are more likely to have had, or currently have, COVID-19 than any other illness.

A negative result can occur when not enough virus is present at the time of testing, or because it is either too early or too late in the illness. Having some symptoms and being close to someone in a residential care facility who has the illness may still mean you have been infected.

As a PROBABLE case, you will have to take the same action as a CONFIRMED case (see above). Public Health will ask you to go into isolation, and will identify your household and other close contacts, asking them to stay at home for 14 days from the day they had their last contact with you – longer if they develop symptoms.

I have had a negative test result – can I go to work?

If you were tested because there has been an outbreak at your facility then you can go back to work immediately if your test result is negative.

If you have been tested because you have symptoms, or because you are a close contact, you may not be able to go back to work, even if your test result is negative:

- If you feel unwell, regardless of symptoms, you should not return to work under any circumstances.
- You also have to stay home for 14 days if you are a close contact of someone who has the disease. Please ask your facility before you return to work.
- You cannot return to work if you are a PROBABLE case, until you have been symptom free for 72 hours and it's been ten days since you first had symptoms, whatever is longer.
- Please stay home if you develop symptoms of COVID-19, even if your test result was negative. If your symptoms get worse, please phone Healthline on 0800 358 5453 or your GP.

What information do I need to provide Auckland Regional Public Health Service?

If you are a case (probable or confirmed), public health staff will ask you about your close contacts at work, at home and elsewhere. To stop the spread of this virus to vulnerable people, it is important you tell staff about your **'three Ws': where you've been, when and who you have had contact with** while you were infectious; **this includes everyone you live with.**

I'm a close contact of someone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19. Am I at risk?

If you have been in close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19, you may have been infected with the virus. People may potentially be infectious from 48 hours before they develop any symptoms.

You will need to self-isolate for 14-days from the time you last had contact with the infected person. That's because in some people, it can take up to two weeks before they start showing signs of being sick (if they have been infected). [Information on how to self-isolate](https://www.covid19.govt.nz) is available at www.covid19.govt.nz.

You will need to minimise contact with members of your household as much as possible. You cannot go outside to get essential supplies, and if you go for a walk, you should go by yourself and stay away from others.

Please watch out for symptoms, even if you have a negative test result, and ring Healthline on 0800 358 5453 (available 24/7 with interpreters available), or your GP, if you become unwell. Tell them you are a close contact of a COVID-19 case.

I might be infectious but not know it?

You will be tested if you have been exposed to someone with COVID-19 in the residential care facility, or if there are a number of cases at your facility.

Using personal protective equipment (PPE) correctly is critical to stopping any spread in residential care facilities. Infection control measures must be adhered to, following DHB guidelines.

As well as long standing procedures around infection prevention and control and isolating residents to prevent infectious disease outbreaks, there are new procedures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to manage cases and contacts.

Staff members will be in self-isolation if they have returned from overseas (or been in contact with a COVID case), and unwell staff members must remain at home until they are **completely well**.

Staff must not attend work with **any illness**, no matter how mild.

Physical distancing, where possible, is also important to help reduce the risk of the virus spreading.

Are health workers at greater risk?

Health care workers come into contact with sick people more often than the general public, and have closer contact with them. That's why the health care sector has strict infection prevention and control measures in place to reduce the risk for patients, staff and the public. **If you feel unwell, please stay at home.**

More information: See the Ministry of Health website - health.govt.nz/covid