

# BEING COVID-19 READY AT YOUR PLACE OF WORSHIP

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PREVENT COVID-19  
PROTECT YOUR COMMUNITY



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The [COVID-19 Protection Framework](#) sets out the current requirements for faith-based organisations. This guidance outlines additional measures you can consider to protect your community while there is ongoing transmission of COVID-19 within the Auckland region.

By encouraging COVID-19 safe practices you can reduce the risk of people getting COVID-19 and becoming very ill.

Please look out for your community at this time, especially those who are older or others who could get very sick. This includes people aged 70-plus, pregnant women and those who have a serious underlying health condition like diabetes or cancer.



## Step 1: Think about whether you can gather in other ways

- There is a higher risk of people passing on COVID-19 at indoor face-to-face services or gatherings.
- Before planning or holding a service or gathering consider alternative options for hosting it, or ways to modify the service. This could include:
  - Holding services or gatherings outside where the weather allows.
  - Modifying your service or gathering to reduce high-risk activities, such as sharing food and drink, singing and dancing.
  - Going on-line (e.g. via Zoom, Facebook or Microsoft Teams if you have it).
  - Temporarily pausing or delaying some gatherings if there has been a recent outbreak at your place of worship.
  - Encouraging everyone to wear masks while on site, especially if your gathering or event is being held indoors.



## Step 2: COVID-19 checklist for gatherings & events

### Action to take



#### Remind people to stay home if they are unwell

People who are unwell should get a test and stay home until it comes back negative and they feel better. If they test positive, they will need to isolate at home for 7 days, and so will the people they live with (if they have not had COVID-19 recently).

#### Remind people they can get COVID-19 more than once so need to keep being careful

Unfortunately people are able to get COVID-19 more than once, and there can be increased health risks from getting the virus multiple times.

People who've had the virus before should therefore continue to be careful and keep following advice around masks, distancing and testing if they are unwell.

More information on what to do if you get unwell again after having COVID-19 is available from the [Unite Against COVID-19 website](#).

#### Hold the gathering outside if you can

It is harder for COVID-19 to spread outdoors, especially when there is a breeze and people stay distanced.

#### Consider introducing capacity limits

At Orange there are no capacity limits for indoor gatherings or events, however you may want to still maintain caps on indoor gatherings and events to avoid widespread transmission at your place of worship.

#### Make sure you have ways to contact people

People no longer need to scan-in using the COVID-19 tracer app, however it's still good practice to have contact details for attendees.

This will be helpful if there are multiple cases at your venue following a gathering or event, so you can warn others to watch out for COVID-19 symptoms. Try and keep your congregation rolls up to date, or ask people to follow your social media or share their email addresses.

#### Keep bubbles physically-distanced as much as possible (at least one metre)

Having distance between people in different bubbles helps to prevent the virus spreading. Make sure there are plenty of chairs and space them well apart to allow groups to spread out. Mark the floor to show how far apart people should be sitting to physically distance themselves from others in places of worship like temples.

Consider spreading your prayer times, so that fewer people are attending at any one time. Singing is allowed but bear in mind it increases the risk of COVID-19 spreading.

#### Ventilate indoor spaces

Keep windows and doors open if possible, and use air filtration systems if available.

#### Encourage face mask wearing amongst attendees

Wearing a face mask is an important way to stop COVID-19 spreading and surgical masks are a great option. Face masks are not required for attendees at gatherings and events, however consider encouraging them to be worn when people are moving about your venue, as well as upon entry and exit.

Face masks are required for workers at indoor events and gatherings, including volunteers. Performers and formal speakers, such as a person leading a service, can remove a mask provided they are 2m apart from the audience or other attendees.

To make it easier for people to wear masks you could keep a supply of them at entry points for those who forget to bring one.

#### Accessing masks, tests and cleaning supplies

Tests and masks are currently available for free from [community testing centres](#) around Auckland. You can help people at your place of worship by signposting them to your nearest community testing centre.

Pacific churches can also order free supplies of RATs, masks, gloves and cleaning wipes from the Pacific Response Coordination Hub. To request these contact Lemalu Sititi between 9am and 4pm, Monday - Friday. You can reach Lemalu via email at [Lemalu.sititi@nmf.nz](mailto:Lemalu.sititi@nmf.nz) or by calling 0212295798.

#### Always make 'on-line' an option

Even if you are gathering in-person, consider providing an on-line option too for those in your community who could get really sick if they got COVID-19 or for those isolating. You could also offer an on-line option for any personal, one-on-one prayers or faith-based support.

#### Consider stopping shared meals, and serve food and drink in a safe way.

You could offer takeaway lunches or ask people to eat outside. People serving food must wear masks if the gathering or service is indoors. Make sure there is enough cutlery and cups for everyone so no one has to share.

#### Consider not having full communion

Do not share a communion cup or have people gather at the altar (if this is part of the usual practice for your faith). The minister or lay members can take the bread to each congregant while keeping physical distance, wearing masks and with sanitised hands. Please do not have the bread passed between congregants. Communion wine can be served in individual cups.

#### Avoid high risk activities like hugging and shaking hands

Encourage congregants to signal a sign of peace while keeping physical distance, without shaking hands or embracing.

#### Remind people who attend to let you know if they test positive for COVID-19

If someone unknowingly attends your gathering while infectious, then later tests positive for COVID-19, it's important they tell you. That way you can let others from the gathering know and help to reduce the virus spreading. *See Step 4 in the next section.*

It's important they tell the person leading the service, or the person in charge of the venue or gathering (e.g. the pastor, minister, priest). They should not share the information via social media.

#### Make soap, paper towels and hand sanitiser readily available

Encourage people to wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds, then dry well every time:

- After going to the toilet or changing nappies
- Before preparing food, eating or drinking
- After changing nappies

Hand sanitiser is a good option if soap and water aren't available. Keeping your hands clean helps to keep everyone well.

#### Have options available for contactless donation

Encourage devotees to make contactless donations and remove cash donation boxes and/or passed collection plates from your place of worship.

#### Clean and sanitise shared surfaces thoroughly before and after use

Guidance on cleaning is available from the [Ministry of Health](#).



## Step 3: What to do if someone with COVID visits your place of worship

**If someone with COVID-19 attends your service or gathering, take action to reduce the chance of others getting sick too:**

- If someone from your gathering tells you they have tested positive for COVID-19, you should tell the other people who were there at the same time. Use the template on the next page to do this.
- You can use email or social media to communicate with your devotees and congregants. However you should not share the name or any personal information of the person who has COVID-19, as this is private and confidential health information.
- Don't wait for a health professional to reach out before you start taking action – the sooner you start telling others the better.

**Contact Auckland Regional Public Health Service if you need public health advice or support regarding:**

- A COVID-19 outbreak in your community that is spreading quickly (i.e. lots of people are becoming sick with COVID-19).
- You have a large number of people who have been exposed to COVID-19 at your place of worship who could be seriously affected by the virus (for example, they have other health conditions, are pregnant, or are elderly).

**You can contact us:**

- Through our website: <https://www.arphs.health.nz/about-us/contact-us/>
- By calling 09 623 4600. This is available 8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

## Template for telling your community of a COVID case at your gathering

Insert the correct details in the highlighted spaces below before sending.

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<Your usual greeting>

Unfortunately someone with COVID-19 recently attended our <gathering/event> and there is a risk they may have passed on the virus to others. The person was at our <gathering/event name> at the following time(s):

- <Insert Day, Date and Time>

**If you attended this gathering then there is a risk of you getting COVID-19 too, and it's important you follow the below instructions. This will help protect yourself and others.**

### **If you have COVID-19 symptoms or feel unwell:**

- Please stay at home and get a COVID-19 test. Tests are available from [community testing centres](#) around Auckland, or can be ordered [online](#) or by free-calling 0800 222 478.
- If you still have symptoms after a negative test continue to stay at home and then carry out another test the following day. If your symptoms get worse or do not go away contact your local healthcare provider or call Healthline for free on 0800 358 5453.
- If you need to miss work then [financial support](#) may be available. You can show this letter to your employer if necessary.

### **If you test positive for COVID-19 you have the virus**

- You will need to stay home for 7 days from when you got symptoms or tested positive. There is further advice available on the Unite against COVID-19 website: <https://covid19.govt.nz/isolation-and-care/if-you-have-covid-19/>
- It's very important to report your test result, especially if it is positive. This will be required if you have COVID-19 and need to apply for financial assistance, or require support getting food and other essential items. You can record your test result at <https://mycovidrecord.health.nz/> or by free-calling 0800 222 478 (option 3).

### **If you do not have any COVID-19 symptoms**

- You do not need to get a test or stay home (unless you live with someone who has COVID-19), but keep track of how you feel and if you become unwell get a test and stay home.
- For the next 10 days please avoid coming into contact with people at risk of getting very unwell from the virus, starting from the date above. This includes elderly people, pregnant women, or those with serious health conditions.

## **COVID-19 symptoms**

Watch out for the following symptoms. If you start to feel unwell get a test and stay home:

- new or worsening cough
- sneezing and runny nose
- fever
- temporary loss of smell or altered sense of taste
- sore throat
- shortness of breath

Less common symptoms of COVID-19 may include: diarrhoea, headache, muscle aches, nausea, vomiting, malaise, chest pain, abdominal pain, joint pain, or confusion/irritability. These almost always occur with one or more of the common symptoms.

## **If you've had COVID recently**

- If it's been 28 days or less since you last had COVID-19 you should watch out for symptoms. If you feel unwell stay at home until you've recovered, or seek medical help if your symptoms don't go away or get worse.
- If it's been 29 days or more since you last had COVID-19 and you test positive again you will need to isolate for another seven days.
- For more information visit the [Unite Against COVID-19 website](#).

## **For more information**

If you are worried or have questions you should call your GP or family doctor. You can also call Healthline for free anytime on 0800 358 5453. Healthline has interpreters if you need one.

Additional information is available from the below websites:

- The Unite against COVID-19 website has lots of useful information on COVID-19. Visit: <https://covid19.govt.nz>.
- COVID-19 information in other languages is available from: <https://covid19.govt.nz/languages-and-resources/translations/>
- Information about the COVID-19 vaccination is available from: <https://immunisation.northernregion.health.nz/>
- Information for people with COVID-19 is available from: <https://immunisation.northernregion.health.nz/whanauhq/>.

<Closing greeting>

# 4

## Step 4: Help others to get vaccinated

Encouraging your community to get vaccinated and boosted is the best way to help protect them against COVID-19. The COVID-19 vaccine is free and available to anyone in Aotearoa aged 5 years and over. A second booster shot is also now available to people who are more at risk of getting very unwell from COVID-19, providing added protection.

Use the FAQs to learn more about how people can get vaccinated, and common questions they may have.

### Vaccine FAQs

#### How many doses of vaccine should you have?

- If you're over aged 16 or over you should have two doses of the vaccine, at least three weeks apart. You can then get a booster dose six months after the second dose if you are aged 16 – 17, or three months after the second dose if you're aged 18 or older.
- If you have children aged 5-11, they should have should have two doses, at least eight weeks apart. Children receive a smaller dose and volume of vaccine, and it is given with a smaller needle.
- People who are more at risk of getting very unwell from COVID-19 are recommended to have another booster dose six months after their first booster dose. The second booster dose is encouraged for:
  - people aged 65 years and over
  - Māori and Pacific peoples aged 50 years and over
  - residents of aged care and disability care facilities
  - severely immunocompromised people
  - people aged 16 years and over who have a medical condition that increases the risk of severe COVID-19 illness
  - people aged 16 years and over who live with a disability and have significant or complex health needs or other health conditions

People can check if they need a second booster dose by contacting their GP or ringing the [Book My Vaccine](#) helpline on 0800 28 29 26.

#### Where can people get the vaccine from?

You can get vaccinated at lots of different places in Auckland:

- There are vaccination centres across Auckland.
- There are two Pacific-led vaccination centres in Otara and Westgate.
- There are pharmacies offering vaccination.

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- You can go to your usual doctor to get vaccinated.

You can find all of the vaccination centre locations on-line at [www.nrhcc.health.nz](http://www.nrhcc.health.nz).

When encouraging your community to get vaccinated try and find clinics near your place of worship to make it easy for them.

### How do you book a vaccination appointment?

You can just walk-in or drive up to one of the Auckland vaccination centres during their opening hours.

You can find all of the vaccination centre locations on-line at [www.nrhcc.health.nz](http://www.nrhcc.health.nz).

To book ahead:

- Call 0800 28 29 26 – this line is available from 8am to 8pm, seven days a week and has interpreters available.
- Visit [www.bookmyvaccine.nz](http://www.bookmyvaccine.nz).

### Can pregnant women be vaccinated?

Yes, if you're pregnant you can – and should – get the COVID vaccination.

If you catch COVID-19 when you're pregnant, you're more likely to become very unwell, so it's a good idea to get vaccinated and boosted. The vaccine also protects your baby.

Millions of pregnant people have been vaccinated around the world. Data shows no evidence that the vaccine is associated with an increased risk of miscarriage during pregnancy, and no additional safety concerns have been raised. There are also no additional safety concerns or issues with continuing to breastfeed after vaccination.

### If you've already had COVID, do you still need to get vaccinated?

Yes. Getting vaccinated will help to protect you against COVID, even if you've already had the virus. You need to wait until three months after you have recovered to get your vaccination. If you tested positive, but didn't have symptoms, you can get vaccinated three months after the date of your positive test.

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### Ask your communities to check they're vaccinated against other illnesses

There are now other illnesses and viruses spreading in New Zealand, and a risk of other viruses entering the country, such as measles. For many of these diseases however there are vaccines available which can provide great protection.

People can check with their GP if they and their whānau are fully up-to-date with the vaccines they require. This is especially important for children, those who are older, and those with other underlying health conditions.

Consider asking your community to contact their GP to check they and their family are up-to-date on their vaccines.



## Step 5: What to do if someone in your community has COVID-19 symptoms

If a family member, friend, or someone else you know feels unwell and has one or more symptoms of COVID-19, it's important that they get a COVID-19 test and stay at home:



**Until it comes back negative, AND**



**Until they have felt well and free of symptoms for 24 hours.**

### **If you test positive**

If someone tests positive they will need to isolate at home for seven days and so will anyone they live with.

It's very important people report their test result, especially if it is positive. This will be required if you have COVID-19 and need to apply for financial assistance, or require support getting food and other essential items. You can record your test result, or other people's results, at <https://mycovidrecord.health.nz/> or by free-calling 0800 222 478 (option 3).

For more information on what to do if you test positive visit Unite Against COVID-19: <https://covid19.govt.nz/isolation-and-care/if-you-have-covid-19/>.

### **Getting tested**

Tests and masks are available for free across Auckland from Community Testing Centres. You can find your nearest testing centre at [www.healthpoint.co.nz/covid-19](http://www.healthpoint.co.nz/covid-19), or by free-phoning Healthline: 0800 358 5453.

You can also order Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) and use these yourself at home. You can order RATs online or over the phone:

- **Online:** [requestrats.covid19.health.nz](http://requestrats.covid19.health.nz)
- **Over the phone:** [0800 222 478](tel:0800222478), choose option 3 (8am-8pm, 7 days a week)