

FINAL 28 JANUARY 2022
UPDATE #1

Allied Health sector update re the Omicron Strategy

Kia ora koutou,

Welcome to the first Allied Health sector update! We anticipate this will be the first of a series of updates as information and guidance develops on Omicron. The purpose of these updates is to point you to relevant information as it is released, and a way to respond to your specific questions and concerns.

Responding to Omicron: we are at Phase 1

There are some cases in the community, but we continue to stamp it out

Phase 1		Operational Response
Situation: There are some cases in the community, but we continue to stamp it out	Testing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current testing parameters continue. PCR testing for symptomatic and close contacts.
	Case investigation and contact tracing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cases identified via positive PCR. Cases isolate for 14 days. Contacts actively managed through NCTS and PHUs. Contacts isolate for 10 days. PHUs focus on complex cases and medium-high risk settings.
	Health care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some cases use self service tools such as online contact forms. Clinical care by primary care teams and support by Care Coordination Hubs. Most cases supported to isolate at home.

On Thursday 27 January, Dr Martin Chadwick hosted a pre-recorded presentation from Dr Ashley Bloomfield to walk through the Omicron strategy and component parts. He spoke about the approach agreed with Ministers for managing the Omicron response.

Our sincere apologies and aroha mai for the technical difficulties that some you experienced. You can view the webinar here: <https://livestream.com/vidcom/events/10102011> (starts at around the 5-minute mark).

Please find the slides as well as an A3 summary of the approach embedded below:



26.1.2022 MoH
Omicron strategy wk



Responding to
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As promised, we have collated the 43 questions that came through the chat function during the webinar. We have answered to the best of our knowledge, and like previous outbreaks, information and guidance rapidly evolves. Please be aware that this guidance may be amended in future updates.

Topic	Response
What happens if me or a staff member is	Guidance on the management of Healthcare Workers who are COVID-19 cases or exposed to COVID-19 at work or in the community is currently

<p>exposed to COVID-19?</p>	<p>being updated. This will be published on the Ministry of Health website soon. We will circulate as soon as it is available.</p>				
<p>Will Allied Health, especially non-DHB services be able to access Rapid Antigen Testing?</p>	<p>The Ministry is committed to working with all health providers to introduce RATs to mitigate outbreaks in health care settings.</p> <p>The Interim Guidance is currently being updated and is scheduled to be uploaded to the above webpage in the week beginning 31 January 2022.</p> <p>We will circulate as soon as possible.</p> <p>This page will be an up to date (last updated yesterday) source of information regarding Rapid Antigen Tests: https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/assessment-and-testing-covid-19/rapid-antigen-testing</p>				
<p>Will I have to pay for RATs?</p>	<p>They are free for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Public health and government agencies within higher-risk settings • Unvaccinated people travelling domestically from 15 December to the end of January (these will be supervised tests from selected community pharmacies). This includes where testing is required: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ for domestic air travel when required by the carrier until 31 January 2022 ○ for interisland ferry travel when required by the service operator until 31 January 2022. <p>Businesses that use rapid antigen tests above and beyond the requirements of mandatory testing must pay for tests themselves</p>				
<p>Is my profession deemed a critical workforce?</p>	<p>The exact list of services those workers that provide essential services is yet to be released but it is in progress. We will circulate as soon as possible.</p> <p>Like the COVID-19 Protection Framework, it is expected that the term 'health services' will be considered in a broader sense.</p>				
<p>Who should wear what type of mask and when?</p>	<p>The government requires employees in public facing roles in workplaces captured by the legal vaccine mandate to wear a medical grade mask (Type IIR/Level 2) or above at all times based on the improved efficacy of these face coverings in mitigating transmission. In addition, for health care workers the following masks are required:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="512 1682 1485 2016"> <tr> <td data-bbox="512 1682 632 1839"> <p>Phase 1</p> </td> <td data-bbox="632 1682 1485 1839"> <p>Essential workers including general health workers: Certified well-fitting medical mask</p> <p>Higher risk health workers or border staff: P2/N95 particulate respirators</p> </td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="512 1839 632 2016"> <p>Phase 2</p> </td> <td data-bbox="632 1839 1485 2016"> <p>General health workers: Certified medical mask -Type II R or Level 2 – 3 (a three-layer surgical mask)</p> <p>Higher risk health workers or border staff P2/N95 particulate respirators –</p> </td> </tr> </table>	<p>Phase 1</p>	<p>Essential workers including general health workers: Certified well-fitting medical mask</p> <p>Higher risk health workers or border staff: P2/N95 particulate respirators</p>	<p>Phase 2</p>	<p>General health workers: Certified medical mask -Type II R or Level 2 – 3 (a three-layer surgical mask)</p> <p>Higher risk health workers or border staff P2/N95 particulate respirators –</p>
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	Phase 3	General health workers: Certified medical mask -Type II R or Level 2 – 3 or P2/N95 particulate respirator Higher risk health workers or border staff: P2/N95 particulate respirators
There appears to be an increased number of patients that say they have mask exception. What is the Ministry doing? What can I do?	<p>The Ministry of Health is leading an interagency process to consider improvements to the face coverings exemptions process. We are aware that some people have been mis-using the process to circumvent the rules, which then undermines the use of these cards for those who are legitimately exempt from the requirement.</p> <p>Patients who refuse to wear a mask (or have an exemption), may not be identified until they reach the premise. There is a duty of care to see these patients if they are unwell.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If they present without a mask, they should be asked to wait outside • The patient can be assessed outside (subject to privacy considerations), or they need to be offered a telehealth consult • If face to face is clinically necessary, the patient should be treated with appropriate precautions taken including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ separation in the waiting room, or waiting outside (e.g., in the carpark) from other patients. ○ the use of appropriate PPE by clinical staff interacting with the patient. 	
What does this all mean for health educators?	<p>No legislative change is proposed for the tertiary education sector, as the current settings for this sector broadly align with the proposed extended scope of face covering requirements.</p> <p>Instead, the Ministry of Education will update its guidance to the sector to strengthen the encouragement of mask-use across tertiary sites, and on the types of masks that should be used in relevant environments.</p>	

We will keep everyone informed as much as possible, and hear what is top of mind for you:

- Our office will hold drop-in sessions to provide information
 - The next drop-in session is: 11am, Tuesday 1 February 2022
- You can expect regular weekly updates during the initial Omicron response
- Please feel free to email our office at Sophie.oliff@health.govt.nz or Caitlin.Yeoman@health.govt.nz

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