

Shift to Phase 2 of the Omicron Response Plan

Webinar, February 2022

Presented by **Manatū Hauora | Ministry of Health**

Kia Ora | Welcome

The **purpose of this webinar** is to discuss the shift to Phase Two of our Omicron Strategy and outline what this means for the health sector.

Housekeeping

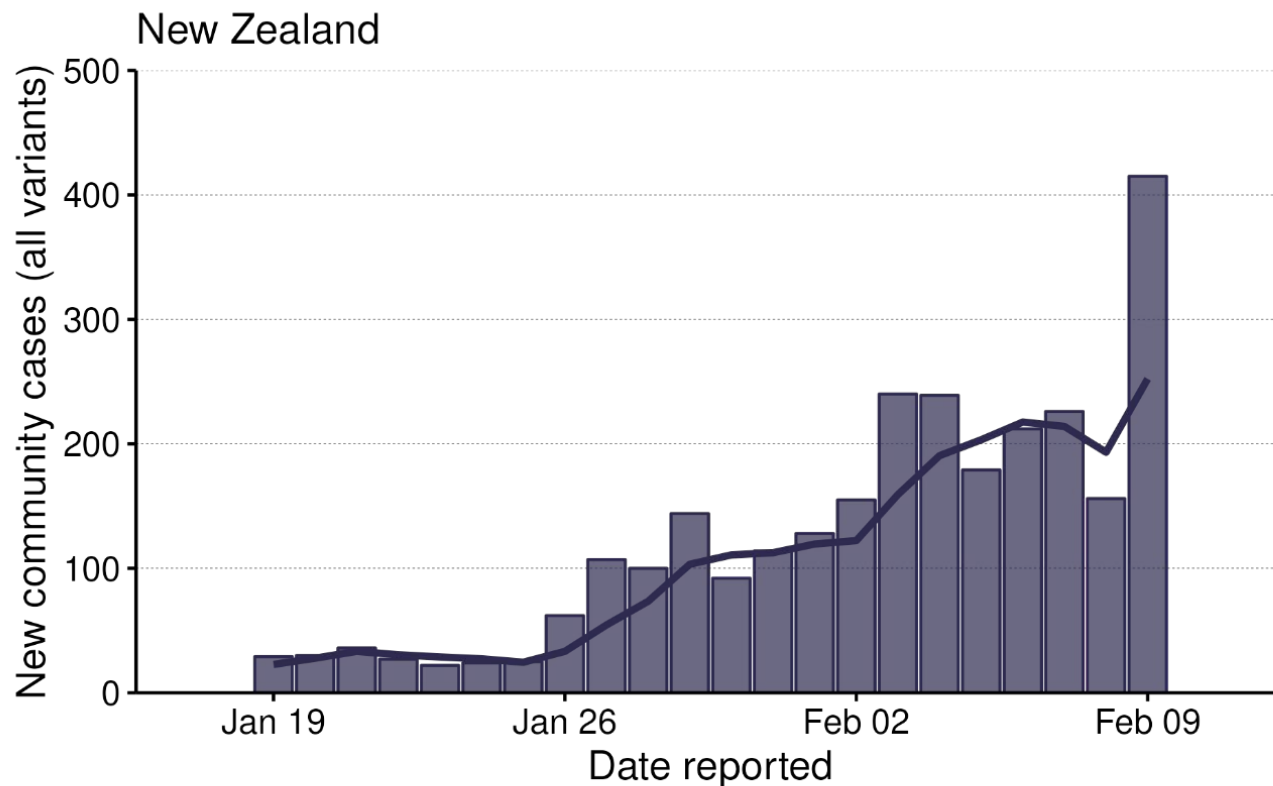
Webinar duration: approximately 1 hour.

Questions and commentary: feel free to use the chat function to send any questions and commentary you have throughout the presentation. Please note, we won't have time to answer questions live, but we will follow up with responses in the coming days.

Recording: this session is being recorded and will be available shortly after the close of presentation.

Setting The Scene – Our Domestic Situation

Community cases **steadily increased** from late-January to early-February before experiencing a **steeper increase** more recently (9 February onwards).



Lines are 4 day rolling averages.

- **Counties Manukau, Auckland and Waikato** DHBs have the highest number of cases.
- Currently community cases are affecting those of **Asian** and **Pacific** ethnicity mainly
- **Test positivity** is rising in most regions.
- On 14 February 2022, Cabinet decided New Zealand will move to **Phase 2** of the Omicron response plan.
- In Phase 2, when cases are **spreading in the community** the country needs to **minimise and slow transmission**.

Key Features Of Phase 2

Use of Rapid Antigen Testing (RATs)

Reduced isolation periods

Greater use of digital tools to support cases and contacts

Continuing a focus on vaccination:

- **Maximising the equitable uptake of boosters**
- **Equitable roll-out to 5 – 11 year old tamariki**
- **Launching the 2022 Flu vaccination programme in April**

Phase Two – Key Operational Changes

Minimise and slow further spread and focus on protecting the most vulnerable

Phase Two	Approach	
<p><i>Situation:</i> Case numbers increasing significantly</p> <p>Growing pressure on health system (but manageable)</p>	<p>Testing</p>	<p>PCR testing encouraged only if symptomatic</p> <p>Enable 'Close Contact Exemption Scheme' if needed for asymptomatic critical workforce using daily RATs.</p>
	<p>Case investigation and contact tracing</p>	<p>Digital technology is used more as case numbers increase - e.g. text via mobile, self-investigation via online tools. PHU and NCIS support available for those not digitally enabled on a prioritised basis.</p>
	<p>Care in the Community</p>	<p>Most positive cases are supported to isolate in their usual place of residence. Alternative accommodation options across the regions are still available. Support by local care coordination hub for those with a need for ongoing clinical care. Begin shift to self-service.</p>
	<p>Isolation & Quarantine</p>	<p>Cases isolate for 10 days.</p> <p>Household Close Contacts isolate with the case. They release on the same day as the first case in the household, provided they have no new or worsening symptoms AND negative day 8 test.</p> <p>Close Contacts isolate for 7 days since last exposure, and self release provided new or worsening symptoms AND negative day 5 test</p> <p>Critical infrastructure/health workforce capacity will be supported by public health guidance to enable close contacts to work, this includes the 'Close Contact Exemption Scheme' and 'bubble of one'.</p>

Equity First – Who Is Most At Risk?

Equitable outcomes, particularly for our disadvantaged populations, are essential to every pillar of our Omicron response.

Poor outcomes

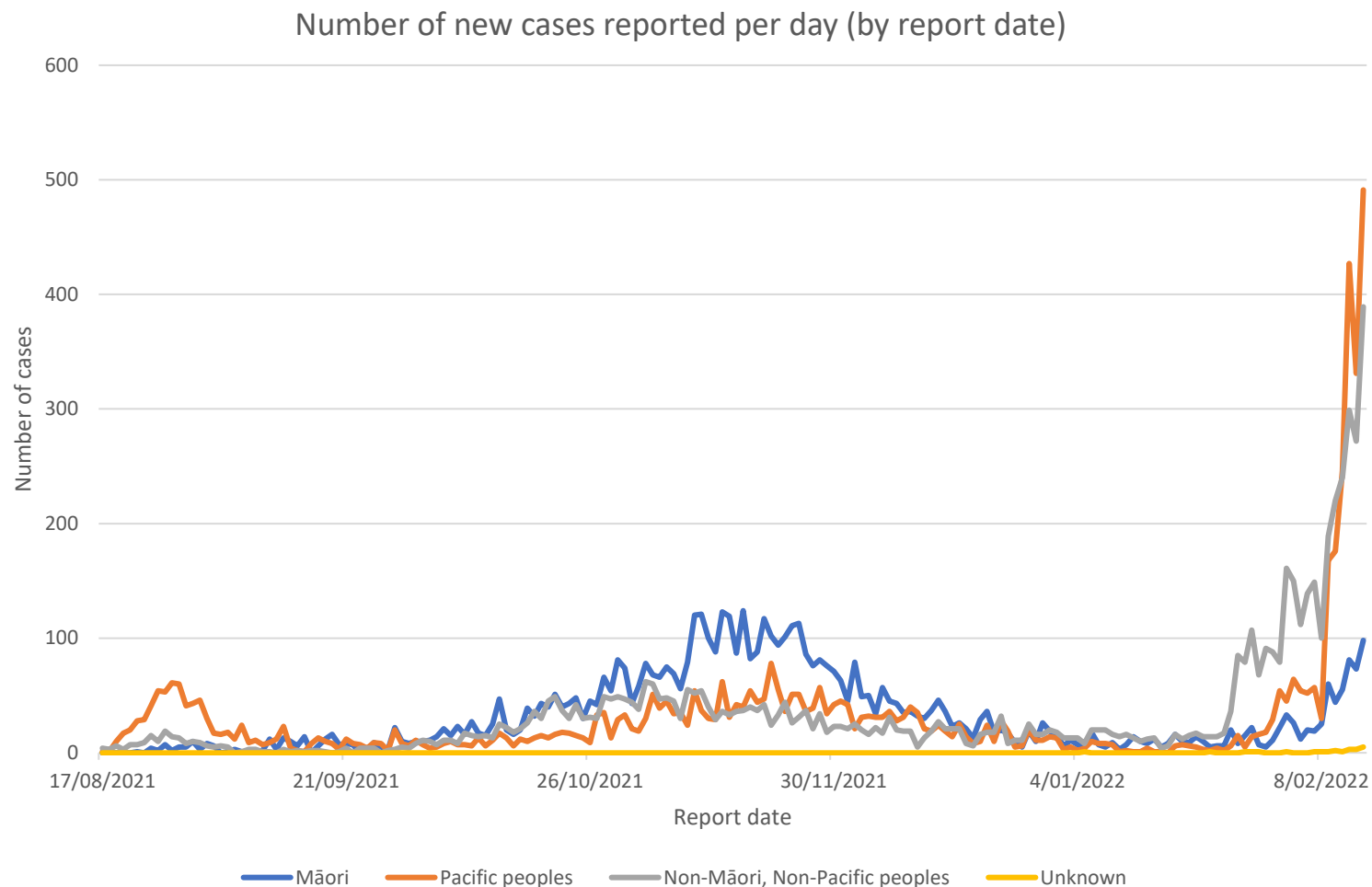
- People over 60 years of age
- Pregnant people
- People with other conditions such as cardiovascular, respiratory, diabetes, inflammatory conditions, immunodeficient states, autoimmune diseases, and mental health issues
- People with poor access to healthcare and prevention services
- Casual/contract workers
- People in aged residential care facilities and hospitals

- Unvaccinated people
- Māori and Pacific communities
- Disabled people
- People with drug/alcohol addiction
- People who experience high levels of material deprivation

Higher transmission

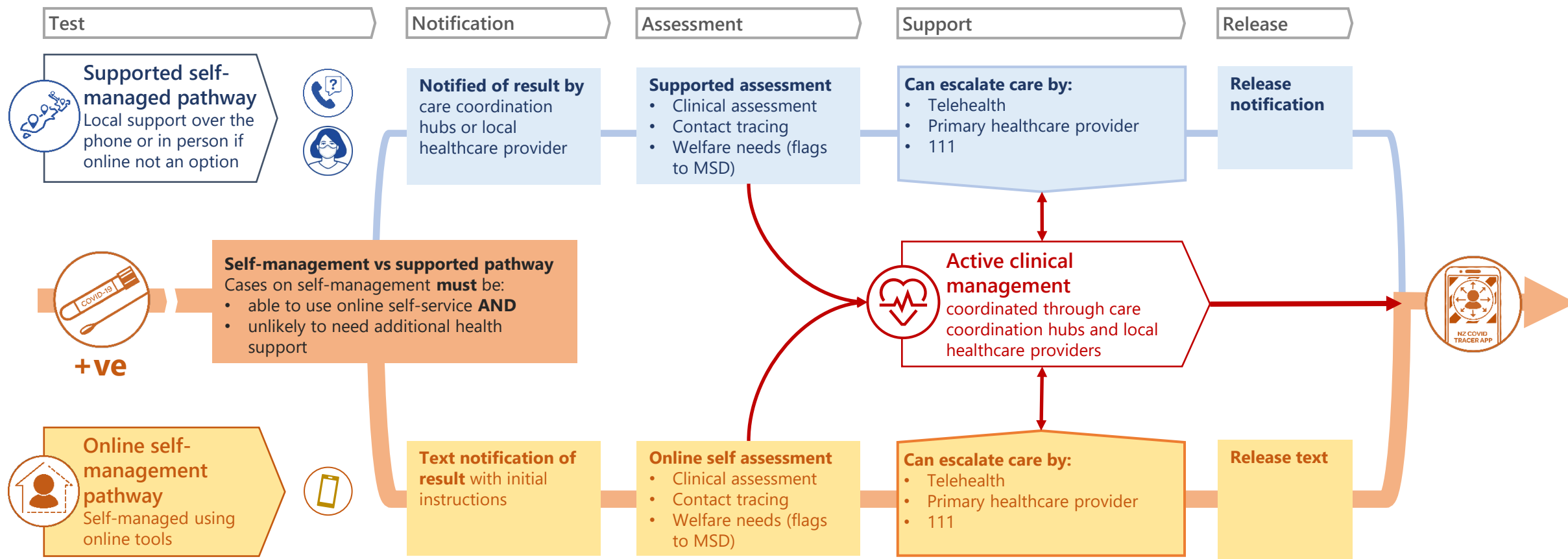
- Young adults age 18-35
- People at large/high density indoor events
- People in temporary housing, overcrowded housing, poor ventilation
- People in prisons
- Healthcare staff
- People who work in frontline services like transport operators and food and beverage workers

Impact Of Omicron On Māori And Pacific Peoples



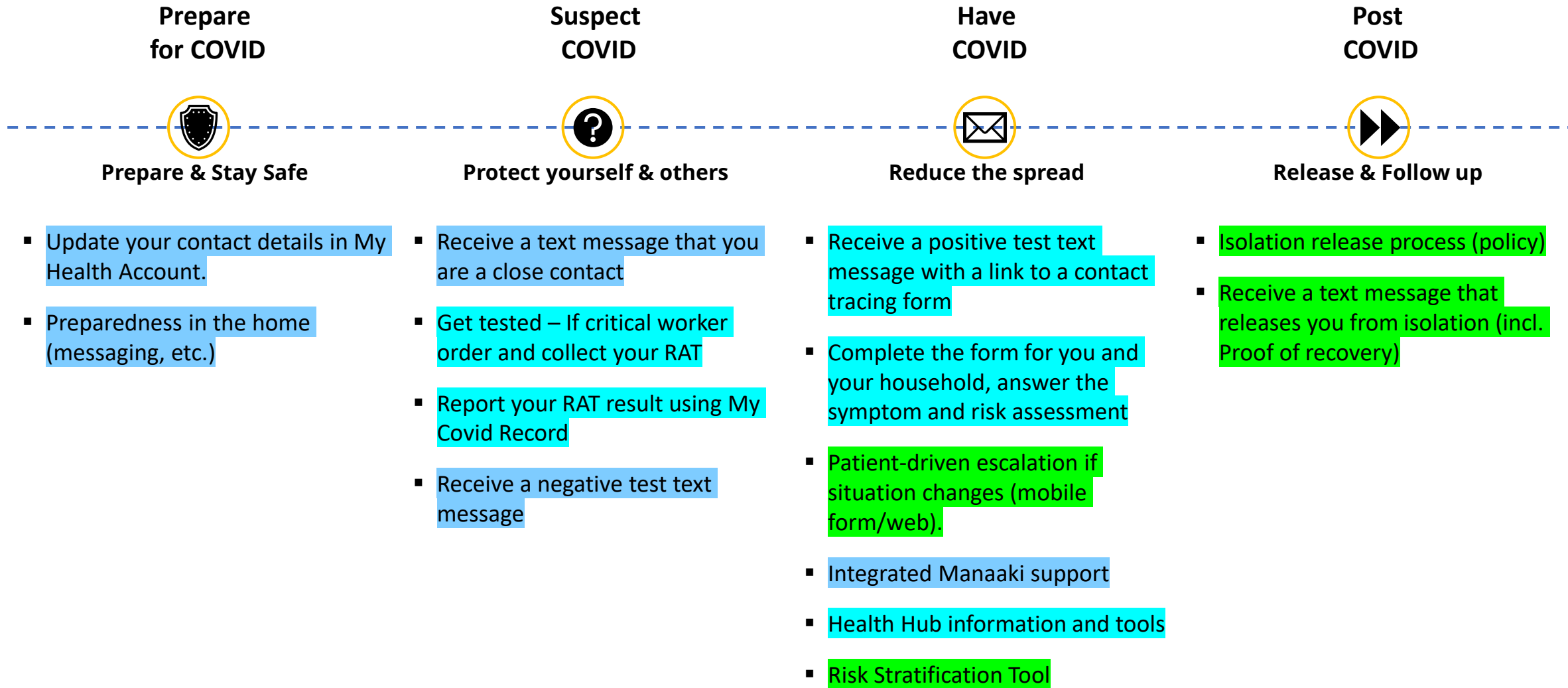
- Impact on Pacific communities likely to be significant from the outset.
- Already disproportionate impact emerging.
- Rationale for equity considerations should now be well understood by the sector.
- 17 DHBs with Pacific cases.
- Additional support for Pacific providers are currently being distributed.

Caring for people with COVID-19 in the community



Digital COVID Care Pathway

- Omicron Response Phases
- Phase 1 (begin shift to self-service)
 - Phase 2 (transitioning to cases using self-serve)
 - Phase 3 (majority of positive cases are self-managed)



Assistance will be provided through a contact centre (0800) for those who don't have access to a digital device or who can't use one. Free text and data applies to pre-paid plans.



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