
All District Health Boards

COVID-19 (Coronavirus): Employee Related General FAQs Updated 17 April 2020 at 1600HRS

This advice is accurate as at **17 April 2020 at 1600HRS**.

It has been developed by 20 DHBs in conjunction with the Ministry of Health and with inputs from major unions to provide clarity for DHB employees on issues such as travel, leave, occupational health and safety, and wellbeing. It has been informed by a range of clinical experts and approved by 20 DHBs for implementation.

It may change rapidly given the nature of the health system response to COVID-19.

Introduction

The contribution of New Zealand's health workforce ('I', 'you', 'your') to supporting the wellbeing of our communities is highly valued by DHBs as employers and by the public in general. As we manage the current COVID-19 situation together, DHBs, unions and the Ministry of Health recognise the importance of you having access to consistent national advice on key employment-related issues.

Please take a few minutes to read this document and understand the temporary changes to normal processes that the DHBs are introducing, in consultation with key unions, while we work through these challenges together.

This document will continue to be updated as developments require and will be recirculated to you. The short-term measures put in place will be regularly reviewed and will be removed as soon as possible. If you have any queries, please reach out to the points of contact outlined in this document.

Thank you for your willingness to demonstrate a degree of short-term flexibility in the interests of continuing to provide best care to our patients.

General Principles

The following principles underpin this guidance:

Collaboration: All healthcare workers are an essential part of our national response to Covid19. We will succeed by working together and supporting each other.

Flexibility: The situation is rapidly changing. We will succeed by being willing to change or compromise.

Agility: The situation is fast moving. We will succeed by being quick, innovative and flexible in our response.

Duty of care: We have a duty of care to provide quality essential health services, and we have a duty of care to look after our own health and wellbeing. The health, safety and wellbeing of ourselves and each other is vitally important to our whanau, our patients, DHBs, unions, and our response.

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About COVID-19

What is COVID-19?

Coronaviruses are a large and diverse family of viruses that cause illnesses such as the common cold. In January 2020 a new coronavirus was identified, now called COVID-19.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

The symptoms are similar to the flu – fever, cough and shortness of breath. If you have these symptoms and have recently travelled or have been in close contact with someone with a confirmed case of COVID-19 please contact Healthline (0800 358 5453) in the first instance or consult your GP (please call ahead).

How serious is coronavirus?

Most people have a mild to moderate illness with flu-like symptoms. People of all ages are being infected, but older people and those with medical conditions seem most likely to get seriously ill.

Where can I get further information about COVID-19?

Click the following link for up to date information which is available on the New Zealand all of government COVID-19 website www.covid19.govt.nz.

About my Health and Wellbeing

IF YOU ARE UNWELL PLEASE STAY AT HOME

How do I keep well?

Keep well through appropriate rest, eating and actions to boost your immune system. It is important to focus on what keeps you well, focusing on all aspects of your wellbeing and giving attention to what keeps you in balance and boosts your wellbeing, this can be slightly different for everyone. When it comes to connecting with others, make sure you are following the COVID-19 guidelines to protect and promote the wellbeing of your whānau/community and yourselves, you may need to adapt ways of connecting with others and nurturing all aspects of your whare.

DHBs are asking all employees, contractors, students and volunteers to do the following:

1. Practice according to approved infection control procedures, being hand washing, social distancing, and cough etiquette.
2. Wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). More information about PPE can be found on the Ministry of Health's website [here](#).
3. Follow all clinical protocols outlined for your area when providing care for people with suspected and confirmed COVID-19. Patients are placed inside rooms and negative pressure rooms where they are suspected to have symptoms that fit the COVID-19 case definition. If in doubt call the Infection Prevention and Control team. NOTE: all of the team providing care will know that the patient has suspected COVID-19 symptoms and the team will be working together to follow approved procedures.
4. When not at work follow all the alert 4 level requirements –this will help us get clear of COVID-19 quicker and with less impact.

Māori model Te whare tapa wha

Using Te whare tapa whā – As a guiding principle framework for Māori and others

https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/maori_health_model_tewhare.pdf

Finding balance – Te whare tapa whā plan for individuals

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/assets/Working-Well/WS-finding-balance-individual.pdf> and

teams <https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/assets/Working-Well/WS-finding-balance-workplace.pdf>

Fonofale Pacific Model for wellbeing

Using the Fonofale model focus on what enhances your wellbeing <http://healthhb.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Fonofale-model.pdf>

General

Employee Assistance Programme (EAP 0800 735 343) facilitated sessions are available, one on one or group sessions. Group sessions can to be booked by your manager. One on one sessions can be booked directly with EAP. If needed, EAP can accommodate group and individual sessions by zoom.

A guide for maintain health and wellbeing - <https://www.healthandsafety.govt.nz/reports/booklets-and-brochures/a-guide-for-maintaining-health-and-wellbeing/> (includes rest, eating, actions etc)

A mental health guide for New Zealand Leaders

https://www.healthandsafety.govt.nz/assets/Documents/A_Mental_Health_Guide_for_New_Zealand_Leaders.pdf (this has sections on diet and sleep etc)

A Personal Wellbeing plan, Five ways to wellbeing

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/assets/Working-Well/FINAL-Personal-wellbeing-plan-WW.pdf>

Refuelling the tank for individuals <https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/assets/Working-Well/WS-refuelling-individual.pdf> Teams <https://www.mentalhealth.org.nz/assets/Working-Well/WS-refuelling-workplace.pdf>

64 ways to take care of yourself

https://www.eapworks.co.nz/uploads/6/8/8/3/6883838/6_4_ways_to_take_care_of_yourself.pdf

A few minutes of self-care

https://www.eapworks.co.nz/uploads/6/8/8/3/6883838/using_a_few_minutes_for_self-care.pdf

I am concerned that I am at risk because I either have a pre-existing condition, I am or am planning to get pregnant, I am immunocompromised, or have a family member who is vulnerable from a health perspective – what do I do?

If you are concerned about how to best protect yourself if you have an existing health issue, we encourage you to contact your Occupational Health and Safety team to complete an occupational health self-assessment. Once you have returned your self-assessment, Occupational Health will assess and advise you and your manager of their recommendations. Outcomes may include remaining at your usual work place, redeployment, work from home, or paid special leave.

See Appendix 1 of this FAQ for further evidence-based advice for pregnant staff.

Remember to always follow approved Infection Control procedures as these are international best practice standards. The same guidance applies to family members.

Can I refuse to work with patients with COVID-19?

We understand that people are anxious right now. This will include those of us that work to deliver healthcare. As someone that works in an organisation providing essential healthcare services, you are employed to use your professional skills to care for whomever presents for care. You are also provided with knowledge, safe procedures and PPE to protect you from risk as much as possible.

If you have any concerns about your immediate safety, it is really important that you contact your line manager in the first instance who should raise this with the HR team.

Who should I talk to if I have concerns that I or a family member may have been exposed to COVID-19?

You or your manager can seek advice regarding anyone who has been exposed to a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19, by contacting Healthline (0800 358 5453) in the first instance or call your GP (please call ahead).

For staff who in the course of their work may be exposed to COVID-19 either through caring for patients or taking lab specimens – what guidance is there around the need to track and monitor those staff for illness?

We are providing staff with education about the appropriate infection prevention and control practices to follow when assessing a patient at risk of COVID-19. We have recommended that the Emergency Departments keep a log of the healthcare worker who saw the patient. Likewise a log of all staff providing care on the ward should be kept. This information should be sent on to Occupational Health and Safety to support contact tracing at a later date if required.

Staff should contact their supervisor or manager if they become unwell with respiratory symptoms; we are not putting in place processes to monitor staff who have cared for COVID-19 patients as we expect them to adhere to infection prevention and control best practice and this should minimise the risk of acquiring infection from these patients.

You should perform hand hygiene according to the '5 moments for hand hygiene', ensure that shared surfaces within the clinical areas are kept clean and stop sharing food in the ward office areas as good measures to reduce staff exposure regardless of whether you are caring for a patient with COVID-19 or not.

What are the implications for my team if I contract COVID-19?

You should contact your manager and let them know that you have a COVID-19 infection. It is a notifiable disease so the public health service will also be in touch with you to learn more about the source of your illness. They will also manage any close contacts that you may have. They will provide these people with guidance about what they need to do.

I need some financial or welfare help?

If you or a family member has been impacted by COVID-19 and the Level 4 restrictions (excluding through your work) then please talk to your manager about what assistance the organisation may be able to provide. You may also be able to access support from Work and Income even if you are not on a benefit.

WINZ can help with:

- Loss of livelihood (where you can't work or have lost your income).
- Food, clothing and bedding (immediate needs to a maximum amount).
- Accommodation costs if you have to move.

You can also cash up your leave as per normal DHB policy.

In addition to the information on the MoH website <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus> an **All of Government Welfare Number, 0800 779 997** is now up and running to provide welfare information and support for individuals in self-isolation, this is available 7 days a week.

There are also a range of supports available via the Ministry of Social Development for family members whose employer is not a government service which their employer can access including sickness and wage subsidies.

Is it safe for me to be working in a hospital environment?

The health and safety of all patients, staff and visitors is a number one priority for all of our DHBs and we adhere to the very highest international infection control standards. Any possible case of COVID-19 within a hospital environment is treated in accordance with these same standards in order to help keep everyone as safe as possible.

We can all help protect ourselves and each other by:

- following the clinical guidelines for appropriate use of personal protective equipment (PPE); and
- observe appropriate physical distancing wherever possible (this may mean changes to behaviour, including meeting in larger spaces and not congregating in cafes and other areas).

What leave provisions would apply if I wish to take some time off work to support my partner at home? e.g. a couple of hours or half a day a week.

We recognise these are challenging times and remain committed to supporting our staff and their families where we can, whilst minimising the impact on our service delivery. We encourage you to discuss these instances with your line manager. Where we are able to accommodate requests for leave, the usual leave provisions in your employment agreement will apply.

Your health & wellbeing is important to us and we will try to accommodate **reasonable** requests for time off whenever operationally feasible. Note that all managers should keep in frequent contact with their staff and support them where possible.

I am scared that I will infect my family when I return home. While I am fit for work one of my family member's health is severely compromised and I am concerned that I will potentially infect them. What can I do?

Coming to Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bring only what you need to work; ▪ Wear your own clothes and shoes to work.
At work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Store your bag in staff area with lunch, drink bottle; ▪ Personal phone – keep in own bag in staff only area ▪ Work phone – keep in ziplock bag; ▪ Frequently wipe clean surfaces and equipment; ▪ Change into work clothes/uniform/scrubs and work shoes; ▪ Follow approved PPE and handwashing protocol; ▪ Observe physical distancing wherever possible.
Going Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leave pen at work; ▪ At end of shift change into own clothes. Place work clothes/uniform/scrubs in plastic bag to take home, or leave at work for laundering ▪ Wipe shoes or leave at work; ▪ Thoroughly wash hands and arms; ▪ Shower if in high risk area; ▪ Collect belongings from staff area.
At Home	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Maintain physical distancing initially; ▪ Put work clothes/uniform directly into washing machine; ▪ Cold wash clothes with detergent; ▪ Dry clothes as normal; ▪ Have a shower if you have not already had one at work; ▪ Hug your family

About my Leave

I am currently stranded overseas and unable to return to New Zealand. What leave provisions are available in these circumstances?

If you are unable to return to NZ due to travel restrictions and border closures, then the leave provisions in your employment agreement will apply e.g. Annual Leave, STIL or Leave Without Pay. Depending on your individual circumstances, Discretionary Leave or Compassionate Leave may be applicable. This would need approval by your manager with delegated authority.

If I am currently on annual leave, can I be asked to be part of the on call roster because of a shortage of staff?

If you are on annual leave, you can be asked but not required to stop or delay your leave to contribute to an on call roster. In the case of an emergency, DHBs may put in place other contingency plans to call you back to work.

My leave (except bereavement and sick leave) is booked, pending or planned – what do I do?

As part of a level 4 lockdown, the government has restricted movement and mass gatherings which may result in you wanting to change your leave plans. We encourage you to discuss this with your line manager in the first instance. Where annual leave has been previously approved this will not be changed except by agreement with you.

What do I do if I have run out of paid sick leave entitlement?

Situations should be looked at on a case-by-case basis, with managers working with HR to determine whether any additional entitlements exist under your MECA or individual employment agreement and what other leave entitlements may be utilised. Forms of leave should ideally be explored and exhausted in the following order for COVID-19:

- Entitled Sick Leave including discretionary Sick Leave in line with employment agreement entitlements, where applicable.
- Lieu days
- Shift Leave
- On-call leave
- Accrued Annual Leave (By agreement).
- Annual Leave in advance (By agreement. Note that if you leave your employment before accrual becomes available you will be expected to repay this leave)
- Leave Without Pay
- “Non-Employment Agreement” Discretionary Sick Leave* DHB discretion

If you are unwell but have no paid sick leave left, please discuss this with your manager. Managers should seek advice from HR or contact Occupational Health and Safety about support for an individual or to assess if sick leave is required. Managers should use their existing delegated authority policies to approve additional paid sick leave.

My service is scaling down/closing and I will no longer be able to perform my usual work/role. Will I be paid Special Leave?

The first option is always to try to find a suitable redeployment opportunity for you so you can continue supporting our community in these challenging circumstances, either at work or working from home.

Paid Special Leave applies when:

1. You are willing and available to work but your usual role/work is currently not available; and
2. You are unable to work from home (in your usual role) or work in a redeployed capacity.

Note there are some special circumstances such as health or sole caregiver requirements where the above requirements do not apply.

What if I can't find any childcare for my children during the lockdown when schools and day care centres are closed – what leave am I entitled to?

We appreciate that with schools and day care centres now closed many people will have to find alternative childcare options. It's important that, as essential workers, you continue to come to work and our expectation is that you make your own arrangements for childcare in line with the social distancing rules during Alert Level 4, for example with your family, neighbours, friends etc. If this isn't possible, the government has made arrangements for you to access funded in-home childcare. More information is available at www.covid19.govt.nz.

In the event that you've exhausted all possible options for childcare, including government funded in home care, please speak to your manager in the first instance. If it's possible your manager might be able to arrange for you to work from home. If this isn't possible, you will be entitled to paid Special Leave. If on special leave because of the inability to arrange childcare, you will be expected to continue to search for alternative childcare options and return to work as soon as feasible.

If I have an excessive Annual Leave balance, i.e. an Annual Leave balance above the accumulation entitlement in my employment agreement, do I have to use Annual Leave first before moving to paid Special Leave after the balance comes down to below the top contractual Annual Leave balance threshold?

If you fit the criteria for paid Special Leave, DHBs cannot direct you to use Annual Leave instead as you are effectively willing and available to work, but no work is available for you.

I am wary of coming to work because of COVID-19. If I refuse to work (including redeployment), will I still get paid leave?

All DHB staff are essential workers and are required to work during a pandemic. We understand that this is a stressful time for everyone working in healthcare but we all have a role to play in the fight against COVID-19. With this in mind, where you do not want to work you should discuss this with your manager to explore how you can be reassured that it is safe to work. Some options may include further training, changing work and/or environments (such as working from home or a different location).

Where you are still unwilling to work, your manager may have further conversations with you about what this will mean for your employment at the DHB. If you continue to refuse to attend work annual

leave requests may be considered but only after Managers have considered overall staff requirements i.e. not all staff can be granted annual leave when there are patient needs to be met and there is a need to have staff at work or be redeployed. If annual leave is not able to be granted or you have exhausted/exhausts the available leave balance any approved leave would be on LWOP.

I am an essential worker, am I able to access the Essential Workers' Leave Scheme?

No. While District Health Boards employees are essential workers, District Health Boards do not qualify for the Essential Workers' Leave Scheme.

The Scheme provides a subsidy to private sector and non-governmental organisation in financial hardship to support them in continuing to pay some or all the wages of essential workers who cannot work because they are sick with Covid-19, have dependents that they need to care for who are sick with Covid-19, or who are required to be in self-isolation.

You continue to be eligible to access the leave entitlements in your employment agreement or the arrangements that have been agreed as part of the DHBs' national Covid-19 arrangements (Cross reference/link to FAQs on leave)

What are the leave payment arrangements?

Shown in Table 1 **below** are possible scenarios that may arise as a result of COVID-19. Please note if you work from home you will be paid as normal working time.

Table 1 - Leave Type Scenarios

Leave Type		
Scenario	Employee Asymptomatic [No symptoms]	Employee Symptomatic / Sick Employee should be appropriately assessed to confirm CoV-19 as per MoH Health Professional Advice.
Employee is symptomatic and may have been exposed to COVID-19.	N/A	Sick Leave
Employee requested to self-isolate for potential non-work exposure. Note: Isolation requirements will be clinically informed and changed as the situation and MOH advice evolves.	Working from Home or Special Leave Special Leave to be paid for the first 14 days self-isolation period Staff member may work from home if these arrangements are suitable.	Where the employee becomes symptomatic/sick while in self-isolation, Special leave for the 14-day isolation period thereafter Sick Leave Refer to relevant MECA/SECA/IEA
Employee requested by DHB to self-isolate for incubation period after not following advice e.g. not following MOH or MFAT travel advisory.	Working from Home or Annual Leave or Unpaid Leave	Sick Leave Refer to relevant MECA/SECA/IEA
Employee is potentially exposed to COVID-19 during the course of their work.	Special Leave may be available where the exposure can be directly linked to an employee's work.	Sick Leave or Special Leave Special Leave may be available where the exposure can be directly linked to an employee's work.
Children or dependant are required to isolate or schools and early childhood centres are shut during Alert Level 4 <i>Discussion by Manager with Employee to seek agreement on working from home if suitable</i>	Working from home or Special Leave <i>Employee expected to continue looking for alternative childcare options and return to work as soon as feasible</i>	Sick Leave if either Employee or Dependent becomes symptomatic and requires care. Refer to relevant MECA/SECA/IEA
Employee prevented from returning to the country through border controls.	Please contact your manager to discuss your leave options <i>Leave may be granted for up to 14 days after which we will review your situation with you and may request you to take other types of leave.</i>	Sick Leave
Employee identified as vulnerable through occupational health assessment	Consideration given for redeployment to suitable location/work from home and would be their Ordinary Pay (if they remain at work in line with the definition of special leave) or Special Leave	Sick Leave

About Self-Isolation

I have had close contact with someone who has travelled overseas and who is now self-isolating – what do I do?

You do not need to take any action if you have had close contact with someone who has recently travelled overseas. However, if you develop symptoms you should contact Healthline (0800 358 5453) in the first instance or call your GP (please call ahead).

I have had close contact with someone with a confirmed case of COVID-19 infection in the last 14 days – what do I do?

You will be contacted by the Public Health team in your region and requested to follow their advice. If you develop symptoms you should contact Healthline (0800 358 5453) in the first instance or call your GP (please call ahead) and contact your manager before attending the workplace.

What should I do if I develop symptoms during self-isolation or have completed the period of self-isolation and then develop symptoms?

Tell your manager and then call Healthline (0800 358 5453) in the first instance or call your GP (please call ahead) for advice.

Can I self-isolate without any medical guidance or advice from Healthline?

No, you must have received guidance to self-isolate before you isolate. Guidance can come from Healthline, your GP or the Emergency Department.

What happens if someone comes to work after being asked to self-isolate?

The request to self-isolate for 14 days is clinically recommended and in the interests of public health. Failure to follow public health instructions can result in fines and/or enforced quarantine. If you believe someone has come to work having been asked to self-isolate, please raise this with your manager in the first instance.

If I am required to self-isolate can I work from home?

Every effort will be made to provide you with tasks to enable you to work from home – please discuss this with your manager should you need to self-isolate.

Does the period of isolation apply to all staff or just those in a clinical setting?

It applies to everyone, whether you work in a clinical setting or not. This is to avoid unknowingly passing on the virus if you get it. You can find guidelines on what to do to isolate yourself on the all of government COVID19 site, www.covid19.govt.nz.

About my Business and Personal Travel

We encourage the use of zoom/skype to conduct business rather than face-to-face meetings

What are the current travel restrictions in place as at end – March 2020?

All domestic and international travel has ceased in line with New Zealand government restrictions. There may be limited domestic travel available for essential services to continue while the country is at Alert Level 4.

Any international travel to 30 June should be cancelled and any future bookings deferred until further notice, including to Australia.

Future work-related travel can only be approved by the CEO or delegate.

Personal travel is not possible at Alert Level 4.

What are the current isolation requirements for people entering New Zealand?

All travellers entering New Zealand from 10 April 2020 are required to either go into 14 days quarantine in a government-provided facility (hotel), or if symptomatic to go into managed isolation (separate hotel).

A small number of people will be eligible for exemption from managed isolation, such as medical transfers and essential workers arriving in New Zealand.

You must apply for an exemption before booking your travel. If you do not hold an exemption before you fly, you will be placed in managed isolation.

You must still complete your 14-day self-isolation at home. If you are symptomatic on arrival you will still be placed in quarantine.

If you are already in managed isolation and want to apply for an exemption, due to a serious and unmanageable medical condition, you must discuss this with the facility management team at your hotel.

To apply, email MI_Exemptions@health.govt.nz with the subject "Application for exemption from managed isolation".

Your email must include:

- Date of birth.
- National Health Index number (if known).
- The flight number and date of arrival in New Zealand (if not yet booked, provide planned dates).
- The full name of all those applying for exemption (as detailed on passport used to enter New Zealand).
- A statement setting out your rationale for requesting and exemption, along with any supporting evidence, e.g. medical certificate.
- The flight number and date of arrival in New Zealand (if not yet booked, provide planned dates).
- Your proposed self isolation plan, including address.
- Your proposed travel plan to the private location, ie private car.

Does the DHB travel insurance cover COVID-19 claims – medical treatment, travel cancellations and time away from work?

Insurers may not cover medical expenses or loss of deposits, cancellations, travel disruption and time off work in connection with COVID-19. Please check with your travel co-ordinator. DHB's Liability policy will cover our employees for injury/disability/death provided there is no ACC cover.

What happens to CME or Professional Development funds that are expiring?

We will carry-over any expiring CME or Professional Development funds that are at risk due to these travel restrictions.

What if I was booked to travel for work purposes and I incur non-refundable cancellation charges not covered by insurance?

Airlines, hotels and insurance companies are – in many instances – waiving cancellation charges or reimbursing them. Where there are costs for you as an employee arising from cancellations that are not covered by vendors or insurance, these will be met by the DHB.

The DHB does not cover insurance for personal travel.

I cannot enter New Zealand because I have been stopped at the border in my country or New Zealand?

In the first instance you should contact your manager and discuss your situation. We will provide you with guidance at this point.

About Reimbursements

Will DHBs be reimbursing any of my costs associated with working from home?

DHBs will not pay for costs such as heating, lighting, electricity, gas, water, rent or wear and tear at the remote work site. If a work mobile is not provided the Line Manager and employee will need to agree the most effective way of handling calls whether that is the use of zoom or reimbursement for calls.

If you remain concerned that these arrangements are not sufficient, you should discuss this with your manager to identify what arrangements your DHB might be able to support.

About Students

Will tertiary health students be undertaking placements or working during this period?

The DHBs priority remains to keep staff, students and patients safe.

The Ministry of Health has released policy guidance on student placements during Covid Alert Level 4. [<https://tas.health.nz/employment-and-capability-building/employment-relations/dhb-covid-19-workforce-faqs-and-resources/>]

This guidance provides that placements can continue, if the training provider and the DHB agree that students are carrying out an essential role or tasks.

Placements remain subject to ensuring appropriate supervision arrangements can be maintained.

The DHBs are working nationally to progress this.

Some students are already employed in roles such as HCAs which do not require an APC and may continue to work in those roles.

About Contractors

We have a number of contract and locum doctors who may be exposed in the course of their work – what do we advise them?

Contractors and locums are expected to follow the Government directives in relation to precautions and self-isolation.

About Casual Workers

I currently have several casual shifts booked; will I still be able to work these?

Yes.

If your shifts have already been booked, then you should expect to be able to work these. If your DHBs want to rearrange or cancel these shifts they will need to discuss this with you.

If these shifts are cancelled, you will still be paid for them.

I am a casual worker and I am being offered no shifts at my DHB and have no other work – what can I do?

Consistent with other state sector agencies, DHBs have agreed to recognise the impact of this loss of pay on our casual staff and to make payments to our casual workers during Covid-19 Alert Level 4 ('lockdown').

How much is the payment?

The payment to qualifying casuals will be based on their average weekly DHB pay in the four weeks prior to lockdown.

How do I qualify for these payments?

In order to qualify for the payments you need to be:

1. A DHB-employed casual worker; and
2. To have worked any time during four weeks prior to going into 'lockdown' (26 March 2020).

You also need to agree to accept requests from your DHB to work shifts at least up to the equivalent of the payment.

I am a casual worker and I am still getting some work at the DHB, but less than what I would usually work – am I eligible for this payment?

Yes

In these cases the payment will be made as a 'top-up' to your pay so you still receive the equivalent of your average weekly pay during the four weeks prior to the 'lockdown'

How will the payment be made to me?

in the first instance it will be made as a lump sum to cover the period since the lockdown. DHB payrolls are working to process these as a matter of urgency.

Thereafter the payment will be made as part of the DHB's regular weekly or fortnightly pay run.

What about PAYE and Kiwisaver/Superannuation Payments?

The payment is taxable in the ordinary manner.

The amount payable to you is exclusive of Kiwisaver/Superannuation payments which are paid on top of the amount at your declared deduction amount.

What shifts might I be offered?

You may be offered shifts at your usual workplace or at any other location which the DHB directs you to perform work. This could include performance of your duties for an external party (such as an ARC facility).

Am I still eligible for the payment if I refuse to work a shift offered by my DHB?

The payment is dependent on you being available and prepared to accept offers of work to at least the equivalent of your average weekly hours over the four week prior to the 'lockdown'.

If you refuse to accept a shift without a genuine reason, then the DHB may stop the payment.

What if I work a casual shift at the DHB?

This casual shift will be offset against the payment that is being made to you. For example, if you are paid a set amount under the DHB payment calculation you would need to work in excess of this amount to receive an additional payment from the DHB.

What if I work multiple roles (i.e. a casual role in addition to a permanent role)?

If you have permanent employment with the DHB you will be ineligible for the discretionary payment that is being made to casual workers.

Can I accept other casual work with another employer while I receive the DHB payment?

Yes, however, you need to remember you are agreeing to be available to accept shifts that your DHB may offer you to work.

If you refuse to accept a shift without a genuine reason, then the DHB may stop the payment.

What will happen when the Covid Alert level drops?

The payment will continue while we are at Alert Level 4 ('lockdown').

The DHBs will review the payment mechanism when we move to Alert Level 3 based on what this change means for how hospitals are operating.

What does the payment mean for my future employment as a casual worker?

The payment is made to acknowledge the exceptional times the health system and country are currently going through. It does not change the nature of your employment relationship with the DHB.

This means that when things return to 'normal' you will remain a casual worker and have your usual flexibility to accept and decline any shifts that are offered to you.

About Accommodation

A member of my household is severely compromised, and I don't want to risk potentially infecting them by returning home. What can I do?

We fully understand the concerns you have for your family members, especially where there is an underlying medical issue in the household that places someone at higher risk.

If you work in a Category 1 area [or Red Stream], you should raise your concerns about the health status and risks to members of your household with your manager in the first instance to discuss possible alternate options. Options may include alternate duties.

If you remain concerned that these arrangements are not sufficient, you should discuss this with your manager to identify what arrangements your DHB might be able to support.

I have been redeployed to a facility that is outside my normal place of work and I cannot reasonably travel home. What should I do?

We recommend that you discuss this with your manager in the first instance. The DHB will if required, provide accommodation on a case-by-case basis, using existing practises/thresholds, where you are redeployed to another location that is not within a reasonable distance to your home.

I usually catch public transport to and from work but services have been limited or stopped. I now have no way to get to work. What should I do?

You should raise this issue with your manager in the first instance. There may be a range of options that you can agree to support you to attend your rostered shifts, including potentially temporary accommodation closer to your workplace.

Definitions

Available Paid Leave: – this is by agreement between line manager and the staff member on what type of leave will be taken including:

- Entitled Sick Leave
- Lieu days
- Shift Leave
- On-call leave
- Annual leave entitlement
- Annual Leave in advance (By agreement. Note that if you leave your employment before accrual becomes available you will be expected to repay this leave)

Special Leave: Paid leave granted during exceptional situations including the Covid-19 outbreak where the employee is not sick or injured and is not charged against leave entitlement. Where there is an agreement that employees will receive paid special leave, the payment will be based on their normal rostered duty they were due to work during the period of paid leave.

Discretionary Leave:

“Employment Agreement” Discretionary Sick Leave: Some MECAs specifically allowing the application and granting of additional paid sick leave where an employee has exhausted their accrued paid sick leave entitlements. All MECAs prescribe the exact amount that may be granted, and some allow for the deduction of any leave given to be deducted from future entitlements. Please check the employee’s relevant agreement to see the parameters around granting this.

“Non-Employment Agreement” Discretionary Sick Leave: Paid sick leave granted in addition to any contractual entitlements granted in exceptional circumstances in response to all relevant context including the exhaustion of the other leave types and where extreme hardship would be experienced by the employee if not granted.

IEA – Individual Employment Agreement

MECA – Multi Employer Collective Agreement

SECA – Single Employer Collective Agreement

Appendix 1: COVID 19 – FAQs for Employees who are Pregnant

Can COVID-19 cause problems for a pregnancy?

We do not know at this time if COVID-19 would cause problems during pregnancy or affect the health of the baby after birth. Generally, pregnant women do not appear more likely to be severely unwell than other healthy adults if they develop the new coronavirus. It is expected the large majority of pregnant women will experience only mild or moderate cold/flu like symptoms.

If you think you may have symptoms of COVID-19 you should contact your maternity care team or Healthline for further information and advice.

Can COVID-19 be passed from a pregnant woman to the fetus or newborn?

We still do not know if a pregnant woman with COVID-19 can pass the virus that causes COVID-19 to her fetus or baby during pregnancy or birthing. No infants born to mothers with COVID-19 have tested positive for the COVID-19 virus. In these cases, which are a small number, the virus was not found in samples of amniotic fluid or breast milk.

How can I protect myself and others from COVID-19 during pregnancy?

We understand that you will feel worried. Take the opportunity to rest, eat well and maintain your interests and hobbies, where possible. Your baby has the best protection it will ever have i.e. you, so caring for yourself is important. We want to reassure you that the risk to you and to your baby is extremely small. The medical system and dedicated staff are well-trained, world-class, committed and equipped to care for you.

We recommend you follow the guidelines including:

- Regular hand washing with soap and water or alcohol-based hand sanitizer;
- Cover your cough (using your elbow is a good technique);
- Avoid people who are sick;
- Work from home where possible;
- Practice social distancing in your community and in workplace meetings and gathering with colleagues;
- Get the seasonal flu vaccine. This will protect you and your baby from the seasonal flu, but not from coronavirus.

What is the advice if I am a healthcare worker and under 28 weeks' pregnant?

Latest guidance recommends that pregnant women under 28 weeks' gestation (in the first and second trimester of pregnancy) with no underlying health conditions should not work in areas at high risk of COVID19 exposure (Work Zone Category 1 as defined by the National Guidance for Vulnerable Workers). Women under 28 weeks gestation can continue to work in Category 2 work zones (patient facing clinical areas) provided they wear appropriate PPE. When working in Category 3 (non-clinical) work zones, they should follow the guidance on social distancing in the same way as the general population. Within the work environment, we recommend social distancing precautions in work meetings and other gatherings.

What is the advice if I am a healthcare worker and over 28 weeks' pregnant?

Pregnant women from 28 weeks' gestation (in the third trimester of pregnancy), and pregnant women with significant underlying health conditions, such as significant lung or heart disease, may experience more severe symptoms of the virus and are therefore advised to take a more precautionary approach. It is recommended that these women work from home or are placed on leave if their role cannot be performed from home.

What is the advice if I have an underlying health condition or a complicated pregnancy?

If you are in your third trimester (more than 28 weeks pregnant), or have an underlying health condition – such as significant heart or lung disease – you should avoid direct patient contact. You should work from home where possible, avoid contact with anyone with symptoms of coronavirus, and significantly reduce unnecessary social contact.

We encourage you to discuss your individual circumstances with your manager and your local Occupational Health team to seek opportunities to work flexibly in a different capacity and to avoid working directly with patients.

Should I attend my antenatal appointments?

Attending antenatal and postnatal care when you are pregnant and have a new baby is really important to ensure the wellbeing of you and your baby. If you are well, you should attend your antenatal care as normal. If you have symptoms of possible coronavirus infection, you should contact your community midwife to postpone routine visits until after the isolation period is over. You should also explore whether your appointment can be done virtually with your health care provider.

Who can I talk to if I have concerns about my pregnancy?

If you have any concerns, you will still be able to contact your maternity team but please note they may take longer to get back to you. If you have an urgent problem related to your pregnancy but not related to coronavirus, get in touch using the same emergency contact details you already have.

- If you have symptoms suggestive of coronavirus contact your maternity services and they will arrange the right place and time to come for your visits. Under those circumstances you should not attend a routine clinic.
- You will be asked to keep the number of people with you at appointments to a minimum. This will include being asked to not bring children with you to maternity appointments.
- There may be a need to reduce the number of antenatal visits. This will be communicated with you.

As a pregnant healthcare worker, should I be caring for patients with suspected or confirmed COVID-19?

You should avoid, where possible, caring for patients with suspected or confirmed coronavirus infection. If this is not possible, you should use personal protective equipment (PPE) and ensure a thorough risk assessment is undertaken.

Speak to your line manager or contact your local Occupational Health and safety team if you have any concerns.

What are some of the risks of COVID-19 if I'm pregnant?

For women who are trying to conceive, or who are in early pregnancy, there is no evidence to suggest an increased risk of miscarriage with COVID-19. There is also no evidence that the virus can pass to your developing baby while you are pregnant (this is called vertical transmission) or that the virus will cause abnormalities in your baby.

Should I still attend my routine appointments?

Routine antenatal investigations, ultrasounds, maternal and fetal assessments should continue as before, taking precaution to maintain social distancing in the community, waiting rooms or other health centre environs. While it will not influence response to COVID-19 infection, routine whooping cough and influenza vaccination should continue to be administered in pregnancy.

Will it be safe to birth my baby in hospital?

The safest place to birth your baby is in a hospital, where you have access to highly trained staff and emergency facilities, if they are required. It is important to emphasise that a woman's experience of labour and vaginal birth or caesarean section, should not be significantly impacted.

Is it safe for me to breastfeed my baby or express milk?

Women who wish to breastfeed their babies should be encouraged and supported to do so. At the moment there is no evidence that the virus is carried in breast milk and, therefore, the well-recognised benefits of breastfeeding outweigh any potential risks of transmission of COVID-19 through breast milk.

If you have coronavirus and you are caring for your baby, you will be encouraged to breastfeed as normal taking care to:

- Wash your hands properly before touching your baby or any breastfeeding equipment like pumps or bottles.
- Wear a facemask if you are breastfeeding your baby.
- If your baby is being bottlefed the person bottlefeeding should wear a facemask.
- Ask your midwife or other staff to show you how to clean the pump after each use.