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# District Health Boards

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## COVID-19 (Coronavirus): Employee Related General FAQs

### Updated 31 August 2021 at 0900 hrs

### COVID-19 ALERT LEVEL 4

This advice is accurate as at **31 August 2021 at 0900 hrs**.

It has been developed by 20 DHBs in conjunction with the Ministry of Health 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.

The advice will continue to be reviewed and may change rapidly given the nature of the Government and health system's response to COVID-19.

## Introduction

The contribution of New Zealand's health workforce 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, we recognise the importance of you having access to consistent national advice on key employment-related issues.

Vaccines will play a critical role in protecting the health and wellbeing of people in New Zealand against COVID-19.

Vaccination against COVID-19 is a highly effective action to minimise and potentially eliminate COVID-19 and is the best prevention and protection available to health workers. We strongly urge all health workers to get vaccinated and to encourage their family members to do the same.

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

This document will continue to be updated as required and will be recirculated at this time. You can always find the most up-to-date version of this document on the [TAS website](#). 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 flexibility in the interests of continuing to provide best care to our patients.

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## General Principles

The following principles underpin this guidance:

**Collaboration:** All healthcare workers are an essential part of our national response to COVID-19. 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 COVID-19 was identified and has subsequently undergone genetic mutations over time as it adapts to humans, leading to the development of new variants of the virus. The Delta variant has become the dominant variant globally.

It is the most transmissible variant, and it is estimated that on average, one person infected with Delta may infect 5 or 6 other people resulting in rapid outbreaks and is a greater threat to the health of individuals who contract the infection and a greater challenge to contain the spread of the virus in an outbreak. For example:

- Delta can cause people to develop more serious COVID-19 illness than other variants of the virus;
- People with a Delta infection are at higher risk of needing hospitalisation.
- The time from exposure to the virus until first symptoms is shorter for the Delta variant. Some people may have no symptoms (asymptomatic) when infectious.

#### What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

The symptoms are similar to the flu – fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, sneezing, runny nose, and a temporary loss of smell. 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](http://www.covid19.govt.nz).

### About my Health and Wellbeing

#### 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. Vaccination against COVID19 is a critical mechanism to protect you and your whanau.

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

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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, please follow all the alert level requirements – this will help us get clear of COVID-19 quicker and with less impact.

### Māori model Te whare tapa whā

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](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 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. Check with your manager or your DHB intranet for contact details.

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

Mental Health Foundation guides can be found here: <https://mentalhealth.org.nz/>

64 ways to take care of yourself

[https://www.raisementalhealth.co.nz/uploads/6/8/8/3/6883838/64\\_ways\\_to\\_take\\_care\\_of\\_yourself.pdf](https://www.raisementalhealth.co.nz/uploads/6/8/8/3/6883838/64_ways_to_take_care_of_yourself.pdf)

A few minutes of self-care

[https://www.raisementalhealth.co.nz/uploads/6/8/8/3/6883838/using\\_a\\_few\\_minutes\\_for\\_self\\_care.pdf](https://www.raisementalhealth.co.nz/uploads/6/8/8/3/6883838/using_a_few_minutes_for_self_care.pdf)

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### What should I do if I am unwell?

If you are unwell you should not be at work regardless of whether you think it is likely or unlikely that you have been exposed to COVID-19.

If you are experiencing the symptoms of an illness you should stay at home until you have been tested for COVID-19 and have returned a negative test result.

If you return a negative test result and would otherwise return to work you should do so. If you would otherwise not return to work because your illness continues, you should remain at home on Sick Leave.

If you return a positive test result, you should call your manager to determine what next steps you need to take. If you are well enough to work as usual and you are able to, the DHB will support you working from home. If you are unable to work from home i.e. due to your role, the DHBs may provide paid special leave. We encourage you to follow the directions of your local public health authority.

If you are unwell and your illness prevents you from working, the time you spend away from work will be Sick Leave under the provisions of the relevant MECA/SECA/IEA.

### What should I do if I was at a location of interest or if I am a close contact of a COVID-19 case?

If you were at a location of interest published by the Ministry of Health (or you have been designated as a close contact of a known Covid-19 case) you should follow the directions of the Ministry of Health. There is a current notice under the Health Act requiring those who were at a location of interest or who are designated as a close contact to self-isolate.

### What should I do if I am a household contact of a person who has been at a location of interest or has been categorised as a close contact of a COVID-19 case?

As at 20 August 2021, there is an exemption to persons who are required to provide an essential health service who are a household contact of a person who has been at a location of interest or has been categorised as a close contact.

This exemption will allow people who provide an essential health service (i.e. for assessing, improving, or managing the physical or mental health of individuals or groups of individuals) to attend work providing:

- The person concerned has had two injections of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine;
- That the close contact of the person has been tested for COVID-19 following the exposure event and has received a negative test result;
- That the negative test result must be from a RT-PCR test (a test for severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) viral ribonucleic acid using reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction);
- No household members have symptoms of COVID-19.

If it's determined that you fall within the exemption, you will need to provide proof of your vaccination and the negative test result of the close contact.

If you attend work and a household member develops symptoms the [Section 70 exemption](#) will no longer apply, and you must then self-isolate and contact HealthLine.

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### Do I have to wear a face covering at work?

Yes. As an essential service, all staff must wear a mask.

### What are the requirements to wear a face covering outside of work?

Due to the transmissibility of the Delta variant we encourage you to wear a face covering and keep 2 metres distance from others when leaving your home or moving about. Especially if it is difficult to maintain physical distance from others.

The official guidance and expectations for Alert Level 4 can be found on the [COVID-19 website](#) and states you must legally wear a face covering if you are a customer or an employee involving customer contact at a business or service.

This means, you legally must wear a face covering:

- inside any Alert Level 4 businesses and services that are still open and involve customer contact, including supermarkets, pharmacies and petrol stations.
- on public transport and at departure points, for example train stations and bus stops
- on flights
- in taxi or ride-share vehicles — drivers and passengers
- when visiting healthcare facilities

Current exemptions for face coverings remain in place. You do not need to wear a face covering if you are:

- under the age of 12
- have a physical or mental illness
- have conditions or disability that makes wearing a face covering unsuitable.

### **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?**

All vulnerable staff should complete a health assessment with Occupational Health. Unless advised otherwise your assessment result continues to be valid and apply across all alert levels.

If you are a new employee and have not completed an assessment with Occupational Health or if your health circumstance has changed since your last assessment and 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. The Occupational Health and Safety team 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.

**PREGNANT STAFF – PLEASE REFER TO [PROTECTING VULNERABLE DHB STAFF DURING COVID-19 GUIDE FOR PEOPLE LEADERS AND LINE MANAGERS](#) FOR FURTHER INDIVIDUAL ADVICE FOR PREGNANT STAFF.**

**For individualised advice, discuss with your manager and complete a Vulnerable Worker Risk Assessment for referral to occupational health services if required.**

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

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

We understand that people are anxious during this time. 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 have provided 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 (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.

The Ministry of Social Development can help with:

- Loss of livelihood (where you can't work or have lost your income).

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- 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).

**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?**

<b>Coming to Work</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bring only what you need to work;</li> <li>▪ Wear your own clothes and shoes to work.</li> </ul>
<b>At work</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Store your bag in staff area with lunch, drink bottle;</li> <li>▪ Personal phone – keep in own bag in staff only area</li> <li>▪ Work phone – keep in ziplock bag;</li> <li>▪ Frequently wipe clean surfaces and equipment;</li> <li>▪ Change into work clothes/uniform/scrubs and work shoes;</li> <li>▪ Follow approved PPE and handwashing protocol;</li> <li>▪ Observe physical distancing wherever possible.</li> </ul>
<b>Going Home</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Leave pen at work;</li> <li>▪ 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</li> <li>▪ Wipe shoes or leave at work;</li> <li>▪ Thoroughly wash hands and arms;</li> </ul>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Shower if in high risk area;</li> <li>▪ Collect belongings from staff area.</li> </ul>
<b>At Home</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Maintain physical distancing initially;</li> <li>▪ Put work clothes/uniform directly into washing machine;</li> <li>▪ Cold wash clothes/uniform using detergent;</li> <li>▪ Dry clothes as normal;</li> <li>▪ Have a shower if you have not already had one at work;</li> <li>▪ Hug your family</li> </ul>

### **Can I opt to wear hospital scrubs at work?**

The DHBs support the access to scrubs for clinical staff who are working in COVID-19 areas where they are not normally provided with a uniform to undertake their work activities. As this requires a planned process for the DHBs, where scrubs are provided, the DHBs will arrange for these to be laundered to ensure there is appropriate stock available.

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### About my Leave

MORE INFORMATION RELATING TO SPECIAL LEAVE CAN BE FOUND Figure 1 Special Leave Flowchart

#### 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.

<b>Table 1 - Leave Type Scenarios</b>		
<b>Scenario</b>	<b>Employee Asymptomatic<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Employee Symptomatic<sup>2</sup></b>
Employee is <b>symptomatic and may have been exposed to COVID-19 in a work or non-work setting.</b>	N/A	Refer to Appendix 1: Special Leave flowchart  <b>Sick Leave</b> Refer to relevant MECA/SECA/IEA  If well enough to work as usual, <b>Working from Home or Special Leave</b>
Employee required to <b>self-isolate</b> for potential work or non-work exposure to COVID-19.  Note: Isolation requirements will be clinically informed and changed as the situation and MOH advice evolves.	<b>Working from Home or Special Leave</b>  Special Leave to be paid for the first 14 days self-isolation period  Staff member may work from home if these arrangements are suitable.	Refer to Appendix 1: Special Leave flowchart  <b>Sick Leave</b> Refer to relevant MECA/SECA/IEA  If well enough to work as usual, <b>Working from Home or Special Leave</b>
Children or dependant are required to isolate.  Discussion by Manager with Employee to seek agreement on working from home if suitable.	<b>Working from home or Special Leave</b>  Special Leave to be paid for the first 14 days self-isolation period.  <i>Employee expected to continue looking for alternative childcare options and return to work as soon as feasible</i>	<b>Sick Leave</b> if either Employee or Dependent becomes symptomatic and requires care.  Refer to relevant MECA/SECA/IEA
Children under 14 years are at home when schools and early childhood centres are shut and alternate childcare arrangements can't be made  Discussion by Manager with Employee to seek agreement on working from home if suitable.	<b>Working from home or other agreed leave arrangements</b>  Staff member may work from home if these arrangements are suitable.  <i>Employee expected to continue looking for alternative childcare options and return to work as soon as feasible</i> <i>[<a href="https://www.education.govt.nz/covid-19/">https://www.education.govt.nz/covid-19/</a>]</i>	<b>Sick Leave</b> if either Employee or children becomes symptomatic and requires care.  Refer to relevant MECA/SECA/IEA
Employee requested by DHB to self-isolate for incubation period after personal, non-work-related travel	<b>Working from home/remotely</b> or  <b>Annual Leave or Unpaid Leave</b>	Refer to Appendix 1: Special Leave flowchart  <b>Sick Leave</b>

<sup>1</sup> No symptoms

<sup>2</sup> Employee should be appropriately assessed/tested to confirm COVID-19

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		Refer to relevant MECA/SECA/IEA  If well enough to work as usual, <b>Working from Home</b> or <b>Special Leave</b>
Employee <b>identified as vulnerable</b> through occupational health assessment	Consideration given for redeployment to suitable patient care activities/location/work from home and would be on their <b>Ordinary Pay</b> (if they remain at work in line with the definition of special leave) or, where appropriate mitigations cannot be put in place, consideration will be given for <b>Special Leave</b>	<b>Sick Leave</b>  Refer to relevant MECA/SECA/IEA
Employee wishes to stay away from normal duties due to concern about a vulnerable household member	Consideration given for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• redeployment to suitable role;</li> <li>• working from home; or</li> <li>• accommodation support</li> </ul> Or <b>Annual Leave</b> or <b>Unpaid Leave</b>	<b>Sick Leave</b>  Refer to relevant MECA/SECA/IEA
Employee decides to stay at home to look after child(ren)	<b>Working from Home</b> or <b>Annual Leave</b> or <b>Unpaid Leave</b>	<b>Sick Leave</b> 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 provisions in employment agreement apply e.g. Annual Leave, STIL or Leave Without Pay.</i>	<b>Sick Leave</b>

### **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.

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

Under the Regional Alert Level 4 alerts, restrictions on movement and mass gatherings are in place. You may want to check the restrictions in the region you are intending to travel to. These restrictions may mean you want 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 between the parties. If you wish to cancel your approved leave, you are encouraged to discuss this with your Manager.

### **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

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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.

### **What do I do if I am unwell and 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 employment agreement and what other leave entitlements may be utilised. In order to avoid a default of leave without pay the following Forms of leave should ideally be explored, agreed and utilised 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
- Annual Leave in advance (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, we strongly encourage that you undergo a COVID-19 test. If you 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 scaled down/closed and I am not 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 an appropriate redeployed capacity.

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

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### **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.

### **What if I can't find any childcare for my dependent child(ren) 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 you are an essential health worker and you have no one within your shared bubble arrangement who is able to provide childcare, a person is legally able to leave their home or place of residence to provide urgent care for your child. If this isn't possible the government has made arrangements for you to access funded in-home childcare. More information is available at <https://www.education.govt.nz/covid-19/childcare-for-workers-of-alert-level-4-business-or-services-scheme/>

If your child(ren) are unwell, then you can take sick leave to care for them in the usual manner.

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.

### **I am an essential worker, am I able to access the COVID-19 Leave Support Scheme (previously Essential Workers' Leave Scheme)?**

No. District Health Boards do not qualify for the COVID-19 Leave Support Scheme.

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.

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### About Self-Isolation

#### 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. **Note, there are exceptions that allow essential health workers to leave self-isolation if they satisfy specific criteria, including having a negative COVID-19 test result.**

#### 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 COVID-19 site, [www.covid19.govt.nz](http://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 during level 4?

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.

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 managed isolation facility (hotel), or if symptomatic to go into quarantine facility (separate hotel).

A very small number of people may be eligible for an exemption from managed isolation, such as those with serious medical conditions that cannot be managed in the accommodation provided.

As a general rule those granted an exceptional circumstance release must still complete seven days in managed isolation, have a negative COVID-19 test on or around day 3 and a full health assessment before they can leave. This is because of the increased public health risks that are present in the early stages of isolation. 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 seek a border exemption, please visit <https://www.miq.govt.nz/being-in-managed-isolation/exemptions-from-isolation/>

## COVID-19 ALERT LEVEL 4

### **Who has to pay for managed isolation?**

If you leave New Zealand after the regulations come into force, you will have to pay for your managed isolation unless you qualify for a waiver or are otherwise exempt.

New Zealanders who are currently overseas (that is, who left before 12.01am on 11 August 2020) will have to pay if they visit New Zealand for fewer than 90 days. New Zealanders are defined as New Zealand citizens (including those in the Cook Islands, Niue and Tokelau) and residence class visa holders, and Australian citizens and permanent residents who are ordinarily resident in New Zealand.

Temporary visa holders will have to pay, unless they left New Zealand on or before 19 March 2020, and were ordinarily resident in New Zealand as of 19 March 2020.

Everyone who is entering on a border exception as a critical worker will have to pay. We encourage you to discuss these costs with your employing DHB.

### **What are the charges for managed isolation?**

\$3,100 for the first or only person in the room (whether that is an adult or a child) with \$950 for each additional adult and \$475 for each additional child (3-17 years old, inclusive) sharing that room, all GST inclusive. There will be no charge for children under the age of 3 if they are staying in a room with another person.

### **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 the governments 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.

## COVID-19 ALERT LEVEL 4

### 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.

#### **I understand IRD has released a policy around payment associated with working from home – how does this affect me?**

The IRD advice only relates to the tax treatment of any payments made to employees for working from home, where an allowance is provided by an employer. As per the above, the DHBs do not provide working from home allowances or pay for costs incurred at your remote work site and therefore the tax treatment is not applicable. For more information, please visit the [IRD website](#).

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 don't have IT equipment to join online/contactless training. Will the DHB reimburse me from my Continuing Professional Development (CPD) entitlements if I purchase this equipment myself?**

DHBs support staff accessing contactless and internet-based solutions where face-to-face training opportunities are not available. If you believe you require specific IT equipment for work-related purposes, you should discuss this with your manager.

Your employment agreement and your DHB's policy on CPD expenditure will outline the appropriate reimbursable items covered under professional development arrangements.

### 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.

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

The DHBs have developed guidelines for managing student placements at all alert levels and will work with local training providers to ensure the safe continuation of student placements in accordance with these [guidelines](#). 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.



## COVID-19 ALERT LEVEL 4

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

We are very aware of the difficult and uncertain position our casual workforce is facing at this challenging time.

You should ask your DHB/manager(s) whether they are aware of other employment opportunities that would be suitable for you such as working in Community Based Assessment Centre or Healthline work.

You might also consider whether there are more secure employment opportunities at your DHB including available permanent or fixed-term arrangements. Current vacancies will be shown on your DHBs website.

If you are in need of financial assistance you should contact Work and Income in the first instance.

**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.

**What shifts might I be offered?**

You may be offered shifts at your usual workplace or at other locations. This could potentially include performance of your duties for an external party (such as an ARC facility) depending on the nature of the DHB's response.

### 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/ Zone 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.

## COVID-19 ALERT LEVEL 4

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.

## About ACC

### **If I contract COVID-19 am I covered under ACC?**

If you are infected by COVID-19 due to exposure during work activities, an application to ACC should be made. ACC will determine whether you are covered.

### **My staff member has contracted COVID-19 due to exposure during work activities. What do I do?**

The most important things to do are:

- 1) document all staff members (by name) have been told to view the video, attend training, have fit tests etc if required - this is part of RPP (Resp protection program) requirements and hazard management (all PPE)
- 2) document what the MoH/DHB guidelines were at the time and whether the department was giving similar advice
- 3) document whether the staff member had access to recommended PPE
- 4) document other hierarchy of controls used to reduce the risk prior to the reliance on PPE

## About WorkSafe

### **Do we need to report cases of COVID-19 to WorkSafe?**

There is no need to report COVID-19 cases to WorkSafe even if there is a possibility it was contracted through work. If a worker is diagnosed with COVID-19 a medical officer of health will notify WorkSafe of this, so we don't expect PCBUs or workers to make a notification.

As COVID-19 is a public health matter and the Ministry of Health is the lead agency for responding to COVID-19, WorkSafe does not anticipate taking direct action in any notifications they do receive.

More information can be found here: <https://worksafe.govt.nz/managing-health-and-safety/novel-coronavirus-covid-19/alert-level-4-whats-worksafes-approach/>

## COVID-19 ALERT LEVEL 4

### About Occupational Health

#### **I'm on annual leave while waiting to be seen by Occupational Health and I cannot attend work until I've been assessed. What do I do?**

In the first instance, no one should be on annual leave while waiting for an assessment – it would be special leave, or you should be at work or working from home. The decision to be on leave should be assessed on a case-by-case basis however there is a decision table to guide Occupational Health teams, e.g:

For vulnerable groups and those with underlying health conditions:

- Where that staff member has completed a risk assessment; and
- That staff member has identified an issue in that risk assessment, and
- The assessment is still waiting to be reviewed, and
- The staff member is concerned about their health.
- Managers will discuss whether that person can stay at work (PPE or temp redeployment); or work at home; or be at home on special paid leave until their assessment is reviewed.

If managers require some guidance you should discuss this with your Occupational Health team.

#### **What happens if my Occupational Health assessment determines that I can be at work or redeployed yet my GP advises that I'm unfit to be at work due to health conditions, where do I stand?**

Occupational Health can review your assessment with your GP. Occupational Health physicians are specialists who have additional information about the risk management at individual workplaces so they have more information than GPs. The GP knows you very well and may have additional information that is relevant to you, that Occupational Health need to be made aware of.

#### **Is there an avenue that allows me to challenge the outcome of the assessment by Occupational Health?**

Yes, you can provide any additional medical information from any treating doctors directly to Occupational Health and request Occupational Health discuss this with your treatment providers to review their decision, taking into account this further information.

## COVID-19 ALERT LEVEL 4

### Definitions

**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.

**Dependant Child(ren):** A dependent child is any person aged under 14 in a household (whether or not in a family).

#### **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

**Vulnerable Household Member:** A member of the same household who has an underlying medical condition

**Personal Health Services:** Goods, services, and facilities provided to an individual for the purpose of improving or protecting the health of that individual, whether or not they are also provided for another purpose; and includes goods, services, and facilities provided for related or incidental purposes

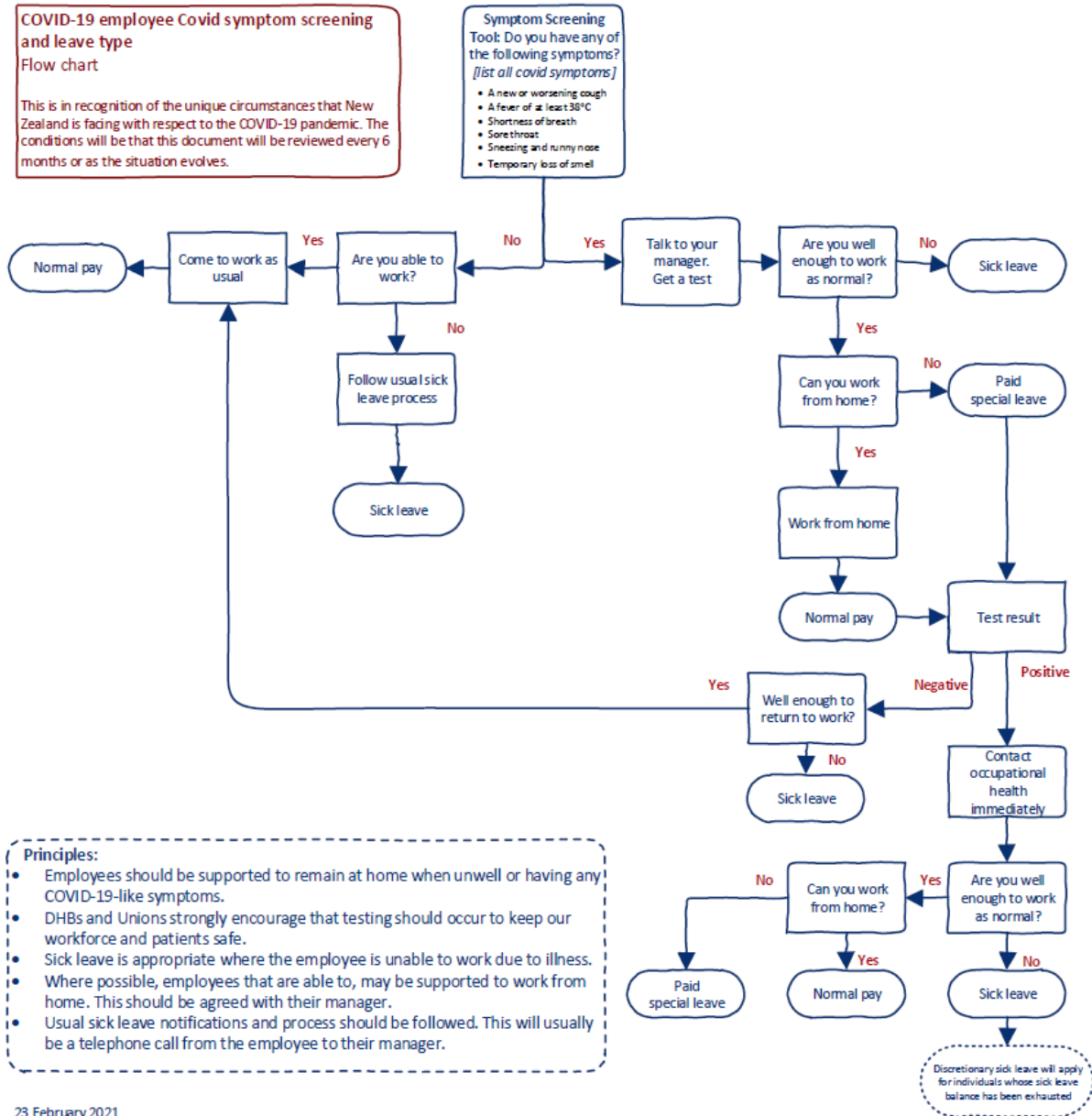
**Public Health Services:** Goods, services, and facilities provided for the purpose of improving, promoting, or protecting public health or preventing population-wide disease, disability, or injury; and includes:

- (a) regulatory functions relating to health or disability matters; and
- (b) health protection and health promotion services; and
- (c) goods, services, and facilities provided for related or incidental functions or purposes

# COVID-19 ALERT LEVEL 4

## Appendix 1: Special Leave Flowchart

Figure 1 Special Leave Flowchart



**Principles:**

- Employees should be supported to remain at home when unwell or having any COVID-19-like symptoms.
- DHBs and Unions strongly encourage that testing should occur to keep our workforce and patients safe.
- Sick leave is appropriate where the employee is unable to work due to illness.
- Where possible, employees that are able to, may be supported to work from home. This should be agreed with their manager.
- Usual sick leave notifications and process should be followed. This will usually be a telephone call from the employee to their manager.