
To:	General Practices, Pharmacists, After-Hours Centres and Emergency Departments in the greater Wellington and Wairarapa regions
From:	Dr Craig Thornley, Medical Officer of Health
Date:	17/03/2020
Title:	Three new COVID-19 cases in New Zealand ; update to Wellington SCL testing

Please distribute the following information to relevant staff in your organisation.

All public health alerts are available at www.rph.org.nz/publichealthalerts

National Health Advisory: three new COVID-19 cases Update to Wellington SCL testing for COVID-19 and respiratory viruses

Three new COVID-19 cases notified

This is to notify you that there is has been confirmation to the Ministry of Health of three new COVID-19 cases over the 24 hours through to midday 17 March 2020.

Cases #9 and #10: Both cases are family members recently returned from the USA. They were made aware that someone on their flight was a confirmed case in Brisbane, Australia. They subsequently phoned ahead to Wellington ED on Sunday and were confirmed on Monday. They are now self-isolating at home in Wellington. Contact tracing for the flights and other close contacts is currently underway, being managed by the local public health unit.

Case number #11: This individual recently returned from Germany. They became unwell on Friday 13 March and were tested Tuesday 17 March by a GP in Dunedin, after phoning ahead. The test was confirmed on the same day, Tuesday 17 March. The individual has been self-isolating since becoming unwell on Friday. Two close contacts, family members, have also developed symptoms and are self-isolating. Further contact tracing is currently underway by the local public health unit.

Changes to Wellington SCL testing for COVID-19 and respiratory viruses

Wellington SCL has suspended routine testing for influenza and RSV in samples submitted for COVID-19 testing. Please use only one viral swab for testing (oropharynx followed by nasopharynx using same swab) to test for COVID-19. Additional testing for influenza and RSV is available on request only. This is to preserve supplies of swabs and test reagents.