
To:	General Practices, Pharmacists, After-Hours Centres and Emergency Departments in the greater Wellington and Wairarapa regions
From:	Dr Jill McKenzie, Medical Officer of Health
Date:	17/04/2020
Title:	Public Health Advisory: COVID-19 Updated Case Definition and Ministry of Health Advice on Residential Care Outbreaks

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

COVID-19 Updated Case Definition and Ministry of Health Advice on Residential Care Outbreaks

Information provided by the Ministry of Health National Health Advisory as follows:

The Ministry of Health has updated its guidance on the investigation of COVID-19 cases based on findings from recent case and cluster investigations in aged residential care facilities. A single case within a vulnerable residential institution such as an aged residential care facility, should be considered as a potential institutional cluster. Rapid investigation and case finding should be led by the local medical officer of health and be undertaken in partnership with the facility manager.

In addition to identifying potential sources of infection, it is important to identify any one who may have been exposed to the case while infectious, or where the source is unknown, may have passed it on to the case within the previous 14 days.

Asymptomatic testing of all contacts (staff, residents and visitors) within this setting as a point in time assessment is appropriate, and recommended, in these circumstances. A negative test does not preclude someone from becoming infectious later in their 14 days since last contact with the case, so they should be appropriately quarantined and closely monitored over the remainder of their quarantine period, particularly if their ability to recognise and report symptoms is compromised.

This includes an update to the COVID-19 Case Definition (previous version 8 April 2020):

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-resources-health-professionals/case-definition-covid-19-infection>

Key changes to COVID-19 Case Definition 16 April 2020 are:

- **Widening of Testing**
 - Recommendation that testing should be undertaken for anyone who meets the clinical case definition or when there is a high degree of clinical suspicion, even if not in the priority groups. When there are local testing capacity concerns then priority groups for testing have been identified.
- **Widening of Asymptomatic Testing on Advice of the Local Medical Officer of Health**

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- Recommendation that asymptomatic testing may be required by the Medical Officer of Health to investigate an outbreak or cluster
- Recommendation that a single case of COVID-19 in an Aged Residential Care Facility (or other vulnerable residential institution) may be a situation where the Medical Officer of Health could require testing of asymptomatic staff or residents.