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| <b>To:</b>    | General Practices, Pharmacists, After-Hours Centres and Emergency Departments in the greater Wellington and Wairarapa regions  |
| <b>From:</b>  | Dr Craig Thornley, Medical Officer of Health   |
| <b>Date:</b>  | 22/05/2020   |
| <b>Title:</b> | <b>Public Health Advisory: COVID-19 updates from Ministry of Health. Advice on self-isolation of contacts of cases under investigation; managing relapsing cases</b> |

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

## **COVID-19: Updates on self-isolation for contacts, and management of relapsing cases**

The Ministry of Health has updated the COVID-19 Case Definition document:

<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>

Note that the COVID-19 case definitions themselves have not changed. Instead, the document has been updated to provide advice on:

- self-isolation for household contacts of a case under investigation
- self-isolation for household contacts of a confirmed or probable case
- management of relapsing cases of COVID-19.

### **CLOSE CONTACTS OF A CASE UNDER INVESTIGATION**

Household contacts of a case **under investigation** (i.e., a person who has been tested but does not yet have a test result) do not need to self-isolate, *unless* there is a high degree of suspicion that the case under investigation is likely to be a case (e.g., if the case under investigation has COVID-19 symptoms *and* is themselves a close contact of a confirmed or probable case).

### **CLOSE CONTACTS OF A CONFIRMED OR PROBABLE CASE**

Household and other close contacts of confirmed or probable cases should self-quarantine for 14 days since last exposure with the case and be managed at home with monitoring for symptoms. If they develop symptoms they should be tested and stay in isolation until results are available.

### **MANAGING RELAPSING CASES**

Some cases that met the requirements and were released from isolation have re-presented with mild respiratory symptoms up to three weeks later. The following is recommended:

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- there is little value in retesting for COVID-19 as a positive PCR does not mean they are infectious
- testing is only recommended if their condition deteriorates and they are hospitalised – it may be because of another condition such as bacterial pneumonia rather than COVID-19
- if they are retested and are PCR positive, they do not need to be isolated
- close contacts have no additional quarantine requirements beyond their existing ones, and any new close contacts do not need to be quarantined
- consider testing for other pathogens
- cases should be advised to stay at home until 48 hours of being symptom-free.