

Provider Network Update

February 25 2022

The past week has seen some rapid changes. As of today, Aotearoa is at **Phase 3** in the COVID-19 Omicron response. The whole country remains at **Red** in the traffic light system. Hutt Hospital has moved to Response level 2 (shifting from 'readiness' to 'COVID growth'), and Wellington Hospital has moved to Hospital Response level 1 (shifting from 'readiness' to 'BAU with low COVID inpatient numbers'). Response plans are continually updated in expectation of increased community cases.

Given the rapid changes and the need for clarity through those changes from next week we will update you as need arises, which may mean more than once each week.

This update covers:

- Testing changes at Omicron Phase 3
- Confusion around access to RATs through pharmacies
- Only positive cases and household contacts need to isolate
- Release letters no longer required
- Role of RPH in phase 3
- Primary Care webinar hosted by Ashley Bloomfield now online
- Omicron variant update - attached
- Vaccination programme update
- Protect Greater Wellington website now live
- Change in hospital response level
- Updated IPC guidance for PPE selection
- Upcoming Mental Health & Addiction Zoom workshops
- Wellbeing

Any questions regarding this communication may be directed to 2DHBCommissioning@ccdhb.org.nz

MESSAGE FROM 2DHB CHIEF EXECUTIVE FIONNAGH DOUGAN

I want to start with a message of thanks for all you are doing – both in the community and in our hospitals – to respond to the COVID-19 Omicron outbreak. I appreciate the additional demands on all of you professionally, and in some cases, personally.

The shift to Phase Three is the latest development in what has been a busy couple of weeks in relation to COVID-19 – our entry into Phase Two, rising community case numbers, distribution of rapid antigen tests (RATs), and protestors occupying the area near Parliament for more than two weeks. With these events, and what can feel like an avalanche of COVID information, it truly is a lot to take in.

For more than two years we have all been managing the pressures of keeping a pandemic under control, and now we are preparing once again for a new wave of cases. Thanks to your mahi, we are well prepared to handle COVID-19 cases at work, but on a personal level I know sometimes it can feel like an additional

pressure. That is why it is more important than ever for us to look after our mental health and wellbeing. Once again, thank you.

Fionnagh Dougan

Āpiha Whakahaere Mātāmua | Chief Executive

CHANGES IN TESTING UNDEROMICRON PHASE 3

- Under Omicron Phase 3 the purpose of testing shifts away from trying to find every case to making sure our PCR testing capacity is supporting those that need it the most
- PCR testing will be focused on those who are unwell and more susceptible to the effects of COVID-19
- This testing regime will see much wider use of Rapid antigen tests (RATs).
- RATs are being used at Community Testing Centres where people will be advised which test (PCR or a RAT) is best for them and what to do if the test is positive.
- All border workers who are covered by the Required Testing Order have shifted to using RATs. These will be supplied by border locations or picked up from collection sites.
- RATs are available to critical workers at critical businesses through the Close Contact Exemption Scheme. As at 23 February 7016 orders for RATs have been received through the Scheme.
- Household contacts can now receive a RAT instead of a PCR.
- Symptomatic people and asymptomatic household contacts who receive a positive RAT will be considered as probable cases and not need a PCR test.
- Participating general practices will be able to conduct either a supervised RAT or collect a sample for a PCR test, as required, for symptomatic patients. General practices will also have the ability to provide unsupervised RATs.
- Positive RAT results do not need to be confirmed with a PCR test.

RATS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Now that we are in Phase 3 authorising retail sales of approved RATs to individual members of the public will support greater self-management by New Zealanders during Omicron. These RATs will be sourced and sold by the private market but must be of RATs approved by the Ministry. They will not be drawn from the supply for the public health response. Retail sales of RATs to individual members of the public will be regulated under the Commerce Act 1986, the Fair Trading Act 1986 and the Consumer Guarantees Act 1993. There are still global supply constraints so there won't immediately be RATs on shelves.

USAGE

RATs are most accurate at detecting COVID-19 when a person's viral load is high and they are most infectious. A RAT result is typically available around 20 minutes from when the analysis begins.

[Latest guidance](#) published today is **attached**. The latest version of [How to take a RAT](#) is also **attached**.

RECORDING RAT RESULTS

People should record their RAT result in My Covid Record [Watch how to record your RAT result here](#). People who cannot access or use the website they can call **0800 222 478**

CONFUSION AROUND ACCESS TO RATS THROUGH PHARMACIES

We appreciate this is a difficult time for pharmacies but want to thank you all for the positive impact that pharmacies have made in managing COVID-19 and performing COVID-19 associated activities.

Phase 3 and the move to RATs as the primary testing tool is resulting in a lot of uncertainty in our communities. We appreciate many of you are being asked where the public can collect RAT tests. This situation is being complicated by media messages. To clarify, the situation at present across our 2DHBs is this.

- The swabbing centres are acting as the RAT distribution centres
- A new centre has been set up at Hataitai park which will also distribute RATs
- Early next week there will other centres coming on board

This information can be shared with callers who are asking about this. We will continue to update you as information changes or becomes clearer. Information on Healthpoint will be updated as soon as possible.

ONLY POSITIVE CASES AND HOUSEHOLD CONTACTS NEED TO ISOLATE

The definition of close contacts has changed and rapid antigen tests (RATs) will become the primary mode of testing for the virus. Only someone who has COVID-19 and household contacts will need to isolate. This means only the highest-risk contacts will need to isolate. All other contacts will be asked to monitor their symptoms but don't need to isolate.

The **attached** FAQs provided to testing centre teams are a useful resource if you are fielding questions.

RELEASE LETTERS NO LONGER REQUIRED

In phase 2 and 3 of our Omicron response plan, cases can self-release after 10 days of isolation, as long as they are asymptomatic. The move away from release letters is in line with our Omicron response which empowers cases to manage their situation themselves, so public health officials can prioritise managing vulnerable cases and high-risk exposure events.

ROLE OF REGIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH IN PHASE 3

With the move to Phase 3 of the Omicron response this week there are further changes to the volume of cases Regional Public Health (RPH) will actively manage.

- As daily case numbers and hospitalisations rise, RPH's role will move to focusing on high-risk cases and high-risk exposure events. We will continue to support Maori and Pacific whānau in our communities as required
- Cases are now primarily managed by the National Investigation and Tracing Centre (NITC). Very high risk cases and exposure events will be referred to RPH to follow-up. RPH will look to slow the spread of Omicron in our communities and ease the pressure on health systems through limiting the impact of outbreaks in high risk community settings
- RPH will continue to refer cases to the DHB Care in Community teams to ensure manaaki support is provided to those who need it
- Locations of Interest will no longer be published in phase 3.

PRIMARY CARE WEBINAR NOW ONLINE

Ashley Bloomfield hosted a webinar on the national shift to Phase Three of the Omicron response. The webinar was held on Thursday 24 February and focused on information for following groups community health providers. Link to the recorded webinar is here:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-information-health-professionals/guidance-critical-health-services-during-omicron-outbreak/omicron-webinars-health-professionals>

COVID-19 VACCINATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

HVDHB and CCDHB have some of the highest vaccination rates in the country. CCDHB leads the country for booster vaccination rates and tamariki first doses.

In line with our equity-driven approach, we are running Pacific festival events, outreach clinics and pop-up vaccination clinics at priority schools, where there are a higher percentage of Māori, Pacific, and disabled students.

Booster dose rates for eligible people (18+)

- 2DHB Region: 75%; CCDHB: 76% (1st); HVDHB: 73% (6th)

Booster dose rates for Māori and Pacific

- CCDHB Māori: 65% (1st)
- CCDHB Pacific: 65% (1st)
- HVDHB Māori: 62% (4th)
- HVDHB Pacific: 63% (3rd)

First dose rates, tamariki aged 5-11

- 2DHB region: 61%, CCDHB: 63% (1st), HVDHB: 59% (3rd)

First dose rates, Māori and Pacific tamariki aged 5-11

- CCDHB Māori: 45% (1st)
- CCDHB Pacific: 43% (7th)
- HVDHB Māori: 40% (3rd)
- HVDHB Pacific: 46% (5th)

PROTECT GREATER WELLINGTON WEBSITE NOW LIVE

Our [Protect Greater Wellington website](#) is now live and links with the [Facebook page](#) to update every afternoon with the number of new cases, active cases, testing numbers and vaccination rates.

The website has an excellent resource explaining the process for getting a test, including online booking.

Please continue to remind your friends and whānau to get information on COVID-19 and the vaccine from trusted sources – Positively Pacific and [Protect Greater Wellington](#), the [Ministry of Health website](#), [Unite Against COVID](#) channels, [Karawhiua](#) channels, and the [Te Puni Kōkiri 'COVID-19 Information for Māori' portal](#).

For guidance on protecting yourself and your whānau from COVID-19 misinformation and scams, please visit the [Unite Against COVID website](#).

CHANGE IN HOSPITAL RESPONSE LEVEL

As of midday today (Friday), Hutt Hospital moved to Hospital Response level 2 (shifting from 'readiness' to 'COVID growth'), and Wellington Hospital moved to Hospital Response level 1 (shifting from 'readiness' to 'BAU with low COVID inpatient numbers').

Factors in the decision to change response levels include:

- The number of current COVID inpatients in each hospital and escalating community transmission
- Staff gaps of 10%-15%
- Bed pressures and utilisation

We have tightened hospital visitor policies to ensure that we keep our patients, staff, and community safe as we experience increases in COVID cases, staff shortages, and bed pressures. Details can be found on the home pages of our HVDHB and CCDHB websites.

UPDATED IPC GUIDANCE FOR PPE SELECTION

With the continuing spread of Omicron, the Ministry of Health has updated its [Infection Prevention and Control \(IPC\) guidance for personal protective equipment \(PPE\) selection](#) for community health care workers (HCWs). The update recommends the use of P2/N95 particulate respirators for community HCWs in certain circumstances during Phases 2 and 3 of the public health response to Omicron. The decision to recommend increased use of P2/N95 particulate respirators in Phase 2 supports the preparation for Phase 3.

WHAT IS THE CHANGE?

The guidance already recommended that in high-risk situations, or when undertaking specific procedures that would put HCWs at risk of COVID-19 infection, P2/N95 particulate respirators should be worn.

The updated guidance now recommends:

- All healthcare staff working in Urgent Care and General Practice should wear a P2/N95 particulate respirator for all interactions with patients presenting with undifferentiated diagnosis across all phases of the Omicron outbreak.
- HCWs wear P2/N95 particulate respirators in settings where there are increasing cases (Phase 2) or widespread cases (Phase 3) and both a moderate and higher risk of COVID-19 infection.

A **moderate risk** of COVID-19 infection includes a person with:

- COVID-19 related symptoms but not a close contact of a confirmed case OR
- No COVID-19 related symptoms but a close contact OR required to self-isolate.

A higher risk of COVID-19 infection includes a person with:

- COVID-19 related symptoms and identified by the contact tracing service as a close contact until test results are available (if clear then care as moderate risk)
- Confirmed COVID-19 case during infectious period.

When selecting PPE, the HCW should also consider the local and regional variation for case numbers which may reduce or increase the risk.

ORDERING P2/N95 PARTICULATE RESPIRATORS

The Ministry's PPE Portal has been updated to enable community organisations to order P2/N95 particulate respirators – this change should take effect within the next 24 hours. The Ministry will supply 9320D+ and 1870+ models of P2/N95 particulate respirators to community organisations. Both models are very similar in design, have a high fit test success rate and have at least Level 2 Fluid Resistance.

Please ensure that you place reasonable orders for the volumes you require and with consideration of current delays in the freight network. The Ministry has pre-loaded a range of organisations with P2/N95 particulate respirators. Due to the current volume of email traffic, please only follow up regarding your orders for P2/N95s and other PPE/RATs orders when they have not arrived within a reasonable timeframe, or if you have an identified emergency need such as a facility outbreak.

FIT TESTING AND CHECKING P2/N95 PARTICULATE RESPIRATORS

With wider use of P2/N95 particulate respirators now recommended, it is critical HCWs are aware of how to wear them correctly. To be most effective, P2/N95 particulate respirators need to have an effective seal to the user's face and should be fit tested for each user. However, we understand that access to fit testing services may not always be possible. In the absence of fit testing, we recommend that fit checking/user seal checking should be done every time the user puts on a particulate respirator as described by the manufacturers' instructions. [Further guidance here.](#)

SESSIONAL USE OF P2/N95 PARTICULATE RESPIRATORS

Another important reminder for HCWs during this time is that P2/N95 particulate respirators (like medical masks) can be and should be used sessionally. This means HCWs can continue working without needing to remove and replace their respirators every time a new activity is undertaken or completed.

P2/N95 particulate respirators can be worn for up to four hours at a time, providing they aren't soiled, wet or damaged. [Find out more](#). If you have any questions, please contact us at ipc@health.govt.nz

MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION CHANGE PROGRAMME

Our Mental Health and Addiction Change Programme continues, with a round of Zoom workshops covering the 2DHB integrated community mental health and addiction workstream coming up. See below for dates and Zoom links for workshops which have been customised for different groups, tailored to primary health, and Māori and Pacific stakeholders. Some Zoom links are yet to be confirmed so **please indicate if you are interested and you'd like to be updated** by emailing 2DHBCommissioning@ccdhb.org.nz

Who should attend	When	Details
Primary health care clinicians	1-2pm, Wednesday 2 March	Zoom link Zoom ID: 81897320804 Passcode: 141919
Open invite – all service users, staff, community and stakeholders welcome	10.30am-12pm, Wednesday 2 March	Zoom link tbc
Open invite – all service users, staff, community and stakeholders welcome	1-2.30pm, Friday 4 March	Zoom link tbc
All Māori stakeholders (including all kaupapa Māori providers, staff, tangata whaiora and whānau)	11am-1pm, Thursday 10 March	Zoom link tbc
All Pacific stakeholders (including all Pacific providers, staff and service users)	11am-1pm, Friday 11 March	Zoom link tbc

WELLBEING – SWITCHING ON RELAXATION RESPONSE

No matter where our stress comes from, it is important to regularly 'switch on' our relaxation response so we can minimise the harm that long term stress can cause. We need to trigger this relaxation response to let our body recover. To get long-term benefits we need to regularly turn on our relaxation response. There are many ways to switch it on and these can often be practised anywhere, without special equipment or training. The **attached** document has some short exercises which you can practice anywhere without special equipment to trigger a change in your body's physical response to stress.

THANK YOU

We really appreciate that many are going the extra mile in uncertain times. Stay safe and thank you for the work you do every day. If you have any questions or concerns please contact your contract manager or email us at 2DHBCommissioning@ccdhb.org.nz and a member of the team will respond.

Community & Commissioning Team

2DHB Strategy, Planning & Performance