

## Omicron Update 3: Disability providers

25 February 2021

*This is the third in a series of Omicron related updates to Disability providers. Updates will provide new or updated information as it becomes available. This includes information relevant to our progression through phases 1 to 3 of the Omicron response strategy, or other important information relevant to Providers.*

### Omicron response strategy – Phase 3

At Phase 3 health and social services will focus on those who need the most support. In this phase, there will be more use of rapid antigen testing, and changes to isolation periods.

For more information about the Omicron response strategy visit: [Our response to Omicron | Unite against COVID-19 \(covid19.govt.nz\)](#)

#### Key points about Phase 3

- At Phase 3 Close Contacts no longer need to isolate, however if a Close Contact becomes symptomatic, they should get a test and isolate until they receive their test result.
- Positive cases need to isolate for 10 days, along with their Household Contacts.
- People who live with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 are considered a Household Contact and will need to isolate for 10 days, with a COVID test on day 3 and Day 10. This will mean the household can complete isolation at the same time as the case **if** all tests are negative.
- A symptomatic Household Contact of a confirmed case will become a probable case, therefore no test is needed to confirm they are COVID positive.
- People with symptoms, and people from priority population groups including disabled people can use Rapid Antigen Testing (RATs) for diagnosis.
- RATs will continue to be used for testing asymptomatic critical care workers who are identified as Close Contacts of a COVID positive case, particularly in health and disability settings.
- Contact tracing will focus on identifying high risk cases and supporting people who do not or cannot access technology.
- Digital and automation technology will continue to be used for those who are able to self-manage during their COVID isolation. For example, at the start of self-isolation a case will fill out an online form for themselves and their household contacts that will help the health service work out how much support they need. There are alternative communication methods in place and those identified as high will risk will receive direct support from their local Care in the Community team.

#### Support is available

Information on what to do, and how to get assistance if you test positive for, or are exposed to COVID-19, is available on the [COVID-19 Health Hub | covid19.health.nz](#)

We understand that some people, including disabled people and their whanau, will have additional support requirements if exposed to COVID-19. Please be assured that support is available for people based on their individual needs.

In addition to the information available at [covid19.health.nz](https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/covid-19) – if people are concerned about their health, or that of their family – they can call Healthline on 0800 358 5453. If urgent medical help is needed, call 111 and tell them you have COVID-19.

If people are COVID positive and they or their household needs support getting essentials such as food or medicine, they can call 0800 512 337 for welfare support.

## Relevant Topics

<b>Access to rapid antigen tests</b>	<b>Who can access rapid antigen tests at this time?</b> <p>At Phase 3, PCR tests will be used for people who need it most, and <b>supervised rapid antigen tests</b> (RATs) will become more widely available for people who are <b>symptomatic or Household Contacts</b> of a COVID positive case. Testing sites are listed on <a href="#">Healthpoint</a> and in many cases are existing COVID testing sites, including GP practices.</p> <p>At Phase 3 positive RAT results do not need to be confirmed with a PCR test, except where advised otherwise.</p> <b>Critical workers and RAT testing</b> <p>RATs will also be used for testing non-symptomatic critical workers who are identified as Close Contacts of active COVID-19 cases. RATs are not to be used for surveillance testing.</p> <b>Where do we or our workers get RATs from?</b> <p>Disability support providers can order supplies of RATs from the PPE Portal. Visit either: <a href="http://www.onelink.co.nz">www.onelink.co.nz</a> for northern providers, or <a href="http://www.healthppe.org">www.healthppe.org</a> for providers in all other areas.</p> <p>If providers are not already registered on the PPE portal, they will need to open an account and register. More information, including written Guidance for Community Providers, is available here: <a href="#">Rapid antigen testing for Priority Populations and Community Providers   Ministry of Health</a></p> <p>RATs are also available to critical workers who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• are asymptomatic and</li><li>• are fully vaccinated and</li><li>• are identified as a close contact and</li><li>• need a test to go to work.</li></ul> <p>Disability support providers are identified as Critical Businesses and most of</p>
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	<p>their staff are identified as critical workers. Disability support providers can register under the Close Contact Exemption scheme so that their individual workers can get RAT kits from a collection site. Read about and register for the Close Contact Exemption Scheme at biz.govt: <a href="https://biz.govt.nz">Close Contact Exemption Scheme   biz.govt.nz</a></p> <p>Collection sites are listed on Healthpoint and in many cases are existing COVID-19 testing facilities. To find your nearest collection site visit Healthpoint and search your local area: <a href="#">COVID-19 RATs Testing sites for healthcare and critical workers   Healthpoint</a></p> <p><b>What do workers need to provide at a collection site to collect RATs?</b></p> <p>As well as their vaccine pass, workers will need to show:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a letter from the Critical Services Register OR their critical worker authorisation letter from their employer to prove they are a critical worker in a critical business,</li> <li>• personal ID like a Driver’s Licence to prove who they are, and</li> <li>• the text message confirming they are a close contact and therefore eligible for a test.</li> </ul> <p><b>Should unwell workers use collection sites?</b></p> <p>People should not turn up to a collection site if they are unwell. They should call their health provider or Healthline, and they should get a supervised test at an official testing site.</p> <p><b>Can an employer collect RATs on behalf of their workers?</b></p> <p>Yes, they just need to provide the above information.</p> <p><b>What happens if a site gets multiple close contacts because of a case?</b></p> <p>In some cases, there may be large number of contacts at a specific work site/location. The local DHB and Public Health Unit will work with the site to supply a quantity of RATs directly to the business. Relevant contact details for each DHB are listed here: <a href="#">Rapid antigen testing   Ministry of Health NZ</a></p>
<p><b>Updated Infection Prevention and Control information</b></p>	<p>The IPC guidance for Home and Community workers has been updated to recommend the increased use of P2/N95 particulate respirators in Phase 3.</p> <p><b>What is the change to guidance?</b></p> <p>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.</p> <p>The updated guidance now recommends 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.</p>

	<p>A <b>moderate risk</b> of COVID-19 infection includes a person with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COVID-19 related symptoms but not a close contact of a confirmed case OR</li> <li>• No COVID-19 related symptoms but a close contact OR required to self-isolate.</li> </ul> <p>A <b>higher risk</b> of COVID-19 infection includes a person with:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• COVID-19 related symptoms and identified by the contact tracing service as a close contact until test results are available (where not COVID positive, then treat as for moderate risk).</li> <li>• Confirmed COVID-19 case during infectious period.</li> </ul> <p>When selecting PPE, the home and community worker should also consider the local and regional variation for case numbers which may reduce or increase the risk.</p> <p>The complete IPC guidance can be found here: <a href="#">COVID-19: Infection prevention and control recommendations for health and disability care workers   Ministry of Health NZ</a></p>
<p><b>Exposure Event Management</b></p>	<p>Templates and guidance on how to move through an exposure event can be found here: <a href="#">Guidance for critical health services during an Omicron outbreak   Ministry of Health NZ</a></p> <p>The templates are designed to help to support a provider with application and documentation of the risk assessment and contact categorisation matrix. The Exposure Event templates are helpful to work out the Infectious period. For people with symptoms this starts 48 hours before symptom onset. For people with no symptoms this starts 48 hours before the time the first positive test was taken (PCR or RATs).</p> <p>Once you work out the infectious period, you can go through the matrix provided in the guidance document <i>Management of COVID-19 healthcare staff exposures at work</i>, to determine other factors including Close Contacts. If PPE has been worn properly, the matrix will help identify where IPC practices are good, and the risk of infection is reduced, resulting in fewer cases.</p>
<p><b>How to access N95 masks</b></p>	<p>From 25 February 2022 Disability Support Providers can order N95 masks through either the Healthcare Logistics or OneLink portals.</p> <p>Visit either: <a href="http://www.onelink.co.nz">www.onelink.co.nz</a> for northern providers, or <a href="http://www.healthppe.org">www.healthppe.org</a> for providers in all other areas.</p> <p>A separate process has been set up for Individualised Funding and Hosts are communicating the process to their clients.</p>
<p><b>Significant Service</b></p>	<p>The process for applying for a temporary significant service disruption has been</p>



# COVID-19

<b>Disruption</b>	streamlined.  More information can be read here <a href="#">COVID-19: Exemptions from mandatory vaccination   Ministry of Health NZ</a>
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If you have further questions, please continue to liaise with your Portfolio manager, or email [disability@health.govt.nz](mailto:disability@health.govt.nz)