

## COVID-19 – Update 13

12 August, 2020

Dear Practitioners,

The Prime Minister has announced that Auckland will move to COVID-19 alert level 3 from midday Wednesday 12 August until midnight Friday 14 August. The rest of New Zealand will move to alert level 2 during this time.

The OTBNZ is working with the Ministry of Health and will continue to monitor the situation and give you updated advice as it becomes available. We encourage you to visit the [Ministry of Health's website](#) for updated information.

### What does it mean for Occupational Therapists?

If you practise in **the Auckland supercity region** ([Auckland Council area](#)), you are in Alert Level 3.

This means that care should be deferred or provided via telehealth wherever possible. Care may be provided face-to-face where:

- The situation and/or condition threatens the life of the individual and/or their whānau.
- The service is essential to maintain the basic necessities of life such as self-care, housing, access to food, communication and mobility.
- The service cannot be delivered by a provider currently operating such as A&E or urgent care/DHB services, or other health personnel already in contact with the patient.
- Permanent, significant disability or psychosocial disruption is likely to result if the person is not seen.
- You are the responsible clinician or main health practitioner working with the person or whānau and are best placed to ensure the above.
- You are competent, have the required equipment and are able to manage the infection control standards as detailed on the Ministry of Health website.

The OTBNZ [level 3 and 4 decision tree](#) may be utilised when making decisions about providing care to clients.

For practitioners in other parts of the country, you are in Alert Level 2 from midday Wednesday. This means you can continue to provide care if you can do so safely following the COVID-19 guidelines and the use of telehealth option is encouraged.

### Information for practitioners in all parts of the country:

#### Infection Screening

Screening of clients and others prior to face-to-face interaction should occur. Check that

staff, clients or visitors do not have acute respiratory symptoms (cough, fever, sore throat or running nose), and within the 14 days before illness onset:

- have not had contact with anyone who has been overseas
- have not had close contact with anyone with confirmed (or probable) COVID-19

It is critical that you continue to encourage all patients presenting with [symptoms consistent](#) with COVID-19 to be tested.

### Contact Tracing

Practitioners should keep accurate records of face to face interactions with clients. This should also include any others present to enable contact tracing if required.

This may be achieved using [Covid Tracer App](#) and relevant QR codes. Ensure that QR codes are visible in places of work so that clients and others can use it to record their movements.

### Infection control and PPE

Follow good infection prevention control measures

- Practise good hand hygiene
- Practise cough/sneeze etiquette
- Practise physical distancing, including in waiting and other common areas (2 meters).
- Vigilant cleaning, particularly for high use surfaces such as door handles and handrails

PPE should be used in accordance with the [Ministry of Health guidelines](#). Practitioners should be aware of how to use PPE safely, including donning, doffing and disposal.

### Equity

The COVID-19 Health and Disability System Response Plan states (p.12) these populations are the priority for proactive response by the health system:

- Pacific peoples in New Zealand
- Tangata whenua
- Older people, especially those over 70 years
- People with long-term health conditions
- People with disabilities
- People with mental health conditions
- People living in residential facilities (e.g., aged residential care facilities, hostels, university accommodation or Department of Corrections facilities)
- Refugees and migrant community members

### Keeping safe during the pandemic

Practitioners who have symptoms of COVID-19 should be tested and stay at home. Practitioners should also be aware of how to keep their [whānau safe](#) when working during the pandemic.

### Information sources

The OTBNZ is continuing to update its COVID-19 resource page regularly and will continue to provide information to practitioners as it becomes available. Practitioners are encouraged to seek information from reputable sources:

- Employers and local DHB information.

- The [MoH Āwhina App](#) may be downloaded free by Practitioners. The app provides access to the latest information about COVID-19 relevant to the Health and Disability sector.
- Ministry of Health [COVID-19 information](#) page provides information for Health providers.
- The [COVID-19](#) website also has links to other relevant NZ information.
- [Te Rōpū Whakakaupapa Urutā](#) - COVID-19 Advice for Māori including Health Practitioners.

We will do our best to update you regularly and as quickly as possible when new information comes to hand. We will work with the Ministry and the wider profession to ensure our guidelines are robust and up to date as possible as the situation evolves. Most importantly, we want to ensure we continue to work together to keep everyone safe and limit any further community spread of the virus. Thank you for your ongoing support.

### **Stay home and stay safe**

**Kia Kaha,**



**Andrew Charnock**

Chief Executive and Registrar

Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand

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