



BEING COVID-READY

AT YOUR PLACE OF WORSHIP

**Prevent COVID-19.
Protect your community.**

ARPHS

The Omicron variant of COVID-19 can make people very sick, even if they are fully vaccinated. Please look after your community, especially those who are older or others who could get very sick. This can include people aged 70-plus, pregnant women and those who have a health condition like diabetes or cancer.

This resource is a 5-step guide to:

- ✓ How to hold COVID-19 safe gatherings
- ✓ What to do if someone with COVID-19 visits your place of worship
- ✓ How to protect yourself and your community against COVID-19
- ✓ What to do if someone in your community is unwell

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Step 1: Think about whether you can gather in other ways.

- Before planning or holding a service or gathering consider alternative options.
- Face-to-face services or gatherings increase the risk of people passing on the virus, especially to those who may get seriously unwell.
- While Omicron is spreading quickly in the community, consider temporarily pausing or delaying your gathering, or using other ways to worship and connect instead, such as going on-line (e.g. via Zoom, Facebook or Microsoft Teams if you have it).





Step 2: If you decide to go ahead, use this COVID-Safe checklist:

Action to take	
Remind people to stay home if they are unwell They should get a test and stay home until it comes back negative and they feel better. If they test positive, they will need to isolate at home for 7 days, and so will the people they live with.	
Hold the gathering outside if you can It is harder for COVID-19 to spread outdoors, especially when there is a breeze and people stay distanced.	
Keep to capacity limits No more than 100 people if they are all vaccinated, and keep people apart by using only alternative rows of seats or maintaining a least 1 metre between people. Check vaccine passes at the door and make masks a must. If you have a gathering with any unvaccinated people – the limit is 25 people.	
Keep people physically-distanced as much as possible (at least one metre) Having distance between people in different bubbles helps to prevent the virus spreading if it's present. Make sure there are plenty of chairs and space them well apart to allow groups to spread out. Consider spreading your prayer times, so that fewer people are attending at any one time. Mark the floor to show how far apart people should be sitting to physically	

<p>distance themselves from others in places of worship like temples.</p> <p>Having people singing in choirs, standing close to each other, is not recommended, even if they are wearing masks – singing is one of the highest risk activities for spreading COVID-19.</p>	
<p>Ventilate indoor spaces</p> <p>Keep windows and doors open, and use air filtration systems.</p>	
<p>Ensure everyone wears their masks covering their mouth and nose (and have some spare masks handy for those who don't have one)</p> <p>Wearing a mask is an important way to stop COVID-19 spreading and surgical masks are a great option. People should NOT remove or pull down the mask to talk or sing.</p>	
<p>Always make 'on-line' an option</p> <p>Even if you are gathering in-person, consider providing an on-line option too - for those in your community who could get really sick if they got COVID-19.</p> <p>Offer an on-line option for any personal, one-on-one prayers or faith-based support.</p>	
<p>Keep different groups in their own bubbles</p> <p>For example, if you have a youth group at your place of worship, try and ensure they do not mingle with older people, at least during a COVID-19 outbreak. Avoid mingling with any staff or volunteers on-site too.</p>	
<p>Consider stopping shared meals and serve food and drink in a safe way.</p> <p>You could offer takeaway or pre-packed lunches, or ask people to eat outside. People serving food must wear masks. Make sure there is enough cutlery and cups for everyone so no one has to share.</p>	
<p>Consider not having full communion</p> <p>Do not share the communion cup or have people gather at the altar (if this is part of the usual practice for your faith). The minister or lay members can take the bread to each congregant while keeping physical distance, wearing masks and with sanitised hands. Please do not have the bread passed between congregants.</p>	

<p>Avoid high risk activities like hugging and shaking hands</p> <p>Encourage congregants to signal the sign of peace while keeping physical distance, without shaking hands or embracing.</p>	
<p>Remind people who attend your gathering that it's important for them to let you know if they later test positive for COVID-19</p> <p>If someone unknowingly attends your gathering while infectious, then later tests positive for COVID-19, it's important that they know to tell you. That way you can let others from the gathering know – and help to reduce the virus spreading. <i>See Step 4 in the next section.</i></p> <p>It's important that they tell the person leading the service, or the person in charge of the venue (e.g. the pastor, minister, priest). They should not share the information via social media.</p>	
<p>Make sure bathrooms are well stocked with soap and paper towel, and/or have hand sanitiser readily available</p> <p>Encourage people to wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds, then dry well every time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After going to the toilet or changing nappies • Before preparing food, eating or drinking <p>Hand sanitiser is a good option <i>if</i> soap and water aren't available. Keeping your hands clean helps to keep everyone well.</p>	
<p>Have options available for contactless donation</p> <p>Encourage devotees to make contactless donations and remove cash donation boxes and/or passed collection plates from your place of worship.</p>	
<p>Clean and sanitise shared surfaces thoroughly before and after use</p> <p>Find cleaning advice here: <u>https://www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-general-cleaning-and-disinfection-advice</u></p>	



Step 3: What to do if someone with COVID visits your place of worship

If someone with COVID-19 attends your service or gathering, take action to reduce the chance of others getting sick too:

- If someone from your gathering tells you they have tested positive for COVID-19, you should tell the other people who were there at the same time. [Use the template on the next page to do this.](#)
- You can use channels such as social media to communicate with your devotees and congregants, **but you must not share the name or any personal information of the person** who has COVID-19. This is private and confidential health information.
- Don't wait for a health professional to reach out before you start taking action – the sooner you start telling others the better.

If you need public health advice or support because you have:

- A COVID-19 outbreak in your community of faith that is spreading quickly (i.e. lots of people are becoming sick with COVID).
- You have a large number of people who have been exposed to COVID at your place of worship and who could be seriously affected by the virus (for example, they have other health conditions, are pregnant, or are age 70-plus).

Contact Auckland Regional Public Health Service:

- By email: <https://www.arphs.health.nz/about-us/contact-us/>
- By phone: 09 623 4600 (8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday).

Template for telling your community of a COVID case at your gathering

Insert the correct details in the highlighted spaces below before sending.

Click or tap to enter your usual greetings

We've learned that someone with COVID-19 attended [Click or tap to enter name of gathering / event](#) and there is a risk they may have passed the virus on to others. The person was present at the following time(s):

- [Click or tap to enter day, date & time. Insert multiple dates/times if necessary.](#)

What to do if you were there at this time – if you do NOT live with the person with COVID-19:

- **If you do not have COVID symptoms**, you do not need to get a test or self-isolate. However, please avoid contact with vulnerable groups or individuals for 10 days from the date above, and watch out for symptoms.
- **If you have or develop COVID symptoms**, please isolate at home and get tested immediately (see below for how to do this). If you still have symptoms after a negative test, stay at home until 24 hours after your symptoms have stopped. If your symptoms get worse, contact your local healthcare provider or call Healthline on 0800 358 5453.
- If you are waiting on a test result, it is important you do not go to work or leave your home. If you need to miss work, [financial support may be available](#). You can show your employer this letter if necessary.
- **If you test positive**, there is further advice available on the Unite against COVID-19 website: <https://covid19.govt.nz/isolation-and-care/if-you-have-covid-19/>

What to do if you live with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19

If you live with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, you are a 'household contact'. You should:

- **isolate at home for at least 7 days** - starting from when the person tested positive.
- **get tested on Day 3 and Day 7 of the isolation period**

More information is available from: <https://covid19.govt.nz/testing-and-tracing/contact-tracing/household-contacts/>

You can also call Healthline for free on 0800 358 5453. This is a free, 24/7 service with interpreters available. Tell them you are a 'household contact'.

What to do if you are a household contact and a critical worker

If you are a household contact and a critical worker you may be able to return to work early. More information is available from: <https://covid19.govt.nz/testing-and-tracing/contact-tracing/critical-workers/>

Testing

Testing is free. You can find your nearest testing centre here: www.healthpoint.co.nz/covid-19, or free-phone Healthline: 0800 358 5453.

You can also order Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) and use these yourself at home. RATs are the main type of test now being used, with results only taking about 20 minutes. You can order RATs on-line or over the phone.

- **Online:** requestrats.covid19.health.nz
- **Over the phone:** [0800 222 478](tel:0800222478), choose option 3 (8am-8pm, 7 days a week)

Find out more [here](#).

COVID-19 symptoms

- new or worsening cough
- sneezing and runny nose
- fever
- temporary loss of smell or altered sense of taste
- sore throat
- shortness of breath

Less common symptoms of COVID-19 may include: diarrhoea, headache, muscle aches, nausea, vomiting, malaise, chest pain, abdominal pain, joint pain, or confusion/irritability. These almost always occur with one or more of the common symptoms.

For further help:

- If you are worried or have questions you should call your GP or family doctor.
- The Unite against COVID-19 website has lots of useful information on COVID-19. Visit: <https://covid19.govt.nz>.
- Information in other languages is available from: <https://covid19.govt.nz/languages-and-resources/translations/>
- Information about the vaccination is available from: <https://immunisation.northernregion.health.nz/>
- Information for people with COVID-19 is available from: <https://immunisation.northernregion.health.nz/whanauhq/>.
- You can also call Healthline for free anytime on 0800 358 5453. Healthline has interpreters if you need one.

Click or tap to enter farewell greeting.

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Step 4: Help others to get vaccinated

The best way to protect yourself, your family, your friends and your community from the Omicron variant of COVID-19 is to get:



Two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, **AND**



A booster.

If it's been more than 3 months since your 2nd dose you should get a booster shot to provide the best protection against Omicron. Vaccines are **free** and are available to anyone in Aotearoa aged 5 years and over:

Visit: www.bookmyvaccine.nz

Call: 0800 28 29 26





Step 5: What to do if someone in your community has COVID-19 symptoms

If a family member, friend, or someone else you know feels unwell and has one or more symptoms of COVID-19, it's important that they get a COVID-19 test and stay at home:



Until it comes back negative, AND



Until they have felt well and free of symptoms for 24 hours.

If they test positive, they will need to isolate at home for 7 days and so will anyone they live with.

You can find your nearest testing centre here: www.healthpoint.co.nz/covid-19, or free-phone Healthline: **0800 358 5453**.

You can also order free Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) and use these yourself at home. RATs are the main type of test now being used, with results only taking about 20 minutes. You can order RATs online or over the phone.

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You can get a free test if:

- You have symptoms
- Are a Household Contact
- Are a Critical Worker and need a test to go to work
- Are part of the healthcare and emergency service workforce
- Require a test for domestic travel or to attend court
- Do a job where mandatory testing applies