



Photo by Stephen Harrison

## COVID-19 Update - 22 March 2020

Stephen Harrison — March 22nd, 2020

As you'll know it is important to keep children and young people engaged in education and, wherever possible, maintaining their usual routines. Routines are reassuring and can support children and young people's wellbeing, connection with others, and their learning.

**We all need to work together and help each other at this time. If your school premises need to temporarily close at any point, schools and parents will need to work together to support students to continue their learning and routine at home.**

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern made a statement to the nation today yesterday the impact of COVID-19 on New Zealand. If you missed it you can hear it here - <https://covid19.govt.nz/latest-updates/ministry-of-health-livestream-media-update-210320/>

The PM talked about the following COVID-19 Alert Levels:

- Level 1: Prepare (Disease is Contained)
- Level 2: Reduce (Disease is contained but risks of community transmission growing)
- Level 3: Restrict (Heightened risk that disease is not contained)
- Level 4 – Eliminate (Likely that disease is not contained)

# New Zealand COVID-19 Alert Levels

Unite  
against  
COVID-19

- These alert levels specify the public health and social measures to be taken.
- The measures may be updated on the basis of (i) new scientific knowledge about COVID-19 and (ii) information about the effectiveness of intervention measures in New Zealand and elsewhere.
- The alert levels may be applied at a time, city, territorial authority, regional or national level.
- Different parts of the country may be at different alert levels. We can move up and down alert levels.
- In general, the alert levels are as follows: e.g. Level 1 is a low-level response. Always prepare for the next level.
- At all levels, health services, emergency services, utilities and goods transport, and other essential services, operations and staff, are expected to remain up and running. Employees in these sectors must continue to meet their health and safety obligations.

LEVEL	RISK ASSESSMENT	RANGE OF MEASURES (could be locally or nationally)
<b>Level 4 - Eliminate</b> Likely that disease is not contained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Subsided and intense community</li> <li>Widespread outbreak</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>People restricted to just at home</li> <li>Essential facilities closed</li> <li>Businesses closed except for essential services (e.g. supermarkets, pharmacies, strong and food stores)</li> <li>Relaxing of supply and manufacturing facilities</li> <li>Travel severely limited</li> <li>Major redistribution of healthcare services</li> </ul>
<b>Level 3 - Restrict</b> Heightened risk that disease is not contained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community transmission continuing OR</li> <li>Multiple clusters break out</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Travel to areas with clusters or community transmission limited</li> <li>Affected educational facilities closed</li> <li>Mass gatherings controlled</li> <li>Public venues closed (e.g. libraries, museums, arenas, food courts, gyms, pools, amusement parks)</li> <li>Alternative ways of working required where non-essential businesses should close</li> <li>Non-face-to-face in many core occupations</li> <li>Non-acute (intensive) services and procedures in hospitals deferred until staff hospitalised</li> </ul>
<b>Level 2 - Reduce</b> Disease is contained, but risks of community transmission growing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High risk of importing COVID-19 OR</li> <li>Increase in imported cases OR</li> <li>Increase in household transmission OR</li> <li>Single or isolated cluster outbreak</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Entry border measures maximised</li> <li>Further restrictions on mass gatherings</li> <li>Physical distancing on public transport (e.g. leave the seat next to you empty if you can)</li> <li>Limit non-essential travel around New Zealand</li> <li>Employers start alternative ways of working if possible (e.g. remote working, shift-based working, physical distancing within the workplace, staggering meal breaks, flexible leave arrangements)</li> <li>Business continuity plans activated</li> <li>High-risk people advised to remain at home (e.g. those over 70 or those with other existing medical conditions)</li> </ul>
<b>Level 1 - Prepare</b> Disease is contained	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>High risk of importing COVID-19 OR</li> <li>Several imported cases OR</li> <li>Isolated household cases not associated with imported cases</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Border entry measures to minimise risk of importing COVID-19 maximised</li> <li>Contact tracing</li> <li>Stringent self-isolation and quarantine</li> <li>Intensive testing for COVID-19</li> <li>Physical distancing encouraged</li> <li>Mass gatherings over 1000 controlled</li> <li>Stop home if you sick, report for any symptoms</li> <li>Wash and dry hands, cough into elbow, don't touch your face</li> </ul>

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The PM has stated that we are currently at COVID-19 Alert Level 2. The risk assessment is:

- High risk of importing COVID-19 OR
- Increase in imported cases OR
- Increase in household transmission OR
- Single or isolated cluster outbreak

The range of measures required include:

- Entry border measures maximised
- Further restrictions on mass gatherings
- Physical distancing on public transport (e.g. leave the seat next to you empty if you can)
- Limit non-essential travel around New Zealand
- Employers start alternative ways of working if possible (e.g. remote working, shift-based working, physical distancing within the workplace, staggering meal breaks, flexible leave arrangements)
- Business continuity plans activated
- High-risk people advised to remain at home (e.g. those over 70 or those with other existing medical conditions)

Discussion around individual school closure at COVID-19 Alert Level 2 will occur in the following situation/trigger points:

- When a child, young person, or staff member has symptoms, and has had close contact with a confirmed case (eg. Within their household)
  - And there is no known community transmission.
- When a staff member has symptoms in school/ECE
  - And when there is no known community transmission.
- When a child, young person or staff member tests positive and has been at school or ECE

## Vulnerable People

Information about who is considered vulnerable has been updated today on the [COVID-19.govt.nz](https://www.covid19.govt.nz) website and is as follows:

At risk people include:

- **Those over 70:** Older people often have underlying health issues, including respiratory issues that make them more vulnerable to COVID-19.
- **People with medical conditions:** Underlying medical conditions can make you more vulnerable to COVID-19. In particular, people with respiratory conditions such as COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease), heart conditions, high blood pressure, kidney problems and diabetes.
- **People undergoing a treatment for cancer and blood conditions:** As treatments for cancer and blood conditions affect people's immune systems, this makes them more vulnerable to COVID-19.
- **Pregnant women:** Health experts do not yet know if pregnant women are impacted by COVID-19 in the same way as other people. However, pregnant women experience changes in their bodies that may increase their risk from some infections.
- **People without easy access to healthcare**

## School Staffing

People over 70 years of age and those with compromised immunity and certain existing medical conditions are asked to remain at home as much as they can from now on and avoid any non-essential travel.

This may have an impact on current staff and staff continuity. The Secretary of Education has asked schools to consider a range of options to address staff absences which could include:

- Offering supervision of some classes using non-teaching staff (who have been safety checked) – use those teachers who can work from home to set learning for them and could potentially offer support online back to the class, undertake marking etc
- Implementing distance learning/online learning plans for some classes or year levels – again teaching staff working from home can support their learning at home
- Relief staffing could be an option depending on the pool of available teachers; we are finding he increasingly difficult but where they are available they will be used.

We appreciate your support and patience as we all respond to what are very uncertain times.