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**Post-winter Approach**

Questions and answers

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Q&A

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# Announcement

**Q: What is happening?**

A: From 11:59pm, 12 September 2022, the COVID-19 Protection Framework will end, along with several other COVID-19 public health measures. The COVID-19 response will remain active and operating in the background, with fewer restrictions on individuals.

The key changes are:

* All mask requirements removed, except for visitors in certain healthcare settings. Masks are still required for visitors to certain healthcare facilities (including primary care, urgent care, hospitals, aged residential care, disability-related residential care and pharmacies but not in counselling, mental health and addiction services). Some places may keep mask requirements in place based on a health and safety assessment.
* Household contacts no longer required to isolate, but instead asked to test daily for 5 days.
* Vaccination and testing requirements for travellers into New Zealand are removed.
* Vaccine mandates for the health and disability sector are removed, effective 11:59pm 26 September 2022. Some workplaces may retain vaccine requirements based on a health and safety risk assessment.

**Q: Why is this happening?**

A: With cases falling, our highly vaccinated population, and a good availability of RATs, masks, and anti-viral medicines to slow the spread of the virus and protect our vulnerable populations, now is the right time to move from emergency arrangements to a long-term, sustainable way of managing the pandemic.

**Q: What measures might be brought back, and for how long?**

A: New Zealand has systems in place to monitor COVID-19 at home and internationally and if public health advice says more measures are required, we can re-introduce some measures like additional mask-wearing.

If needed, we can quickly draw on our toolkit of measures that have effectively slowed the spread of the virus over the past two years. Any decision to re-introduce measures would be taken carefully and based on public health advice. We will continue to rely on a multi-layered system of defence to minimise the impact of COVID-19 and protect vulnerable populations while balancing economic and social considerations.

Additional measures would only be used again if a new variant of COVID-19 arrives in New Zealand that is substantially more contagious, has even more serious health impacts, or causes a substantial rise in case numbers that threatens to overwhelm our health system.

How long they could be used for would be based on public health advice at the time.

**Q: Why are some restrictions still in place?**

A: The public health advice is that some measures are still needed to protect vulnerable communities and the health system. That is why important aspects of the response will continue - including the 7-day isolation of positive cases, and mask requirements in certain healthcare settings (including aged residential care). Both of these are important ways to reduce transmission.

Additionally, all New Zealanders continue to be encouraged to practice good health behaviours to keep themselves, and their communities, safe.

Vulnerable communities are encouraged to keep up to date with their vaccinations, including boosters; access free RATs; and talk to their healthcare provider to see if they are eligible for antiviral prescriptions.

**Q: Does this mean the end of the ‘minimise and protect’ strategy?**

A: Since the start of the pandemic, the objective of New Zealand’s COVID-19 response has been simple – to save lives and livelihoods. This remains the objective. As we move from COVID-19 crisis management to a phase of long-term, sustainable management of the virus, the Government’s focus continues to be on minimising the virus’ spread and protecting our most vulnerable communities and the health system. New Zealand has new tools to do so, that allow for fewer restrictions on individuals. This includes high vaccination rates, and good availability of RATs, masks, and antiviral medicines.

**Q: How will the new approach affect communities that are vulnerable, for example Māori, Pasifika and disabled people?**

A: There is always a risk that COVID-19 can disproportionately impact some groups. Protections are now targeted to the most vulnerable.

The continuing protections are:

* + free vaccinations
	+ free P2/N95 masks for eligible people
	+ free RATs (rapid antigen tests)
	+ free antiviral medication for eligible people, and also widening eligibility criteria to all New Zealanders 65 and over, all Māori and Pacific peoples aged 50 and over and those with three high-risk medication conditions. New criteria will be updated here: [COVID-19 medicines | Ministry of Health NZ](https://www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/advice-people-covid-19/covid-19-medicines)
	+ free boosters for eligible people

Additionally, all New Zealanders continue to be encouraged to continue to practice good health behaviours to keep themselves, and their communities, safe. Importantly, we will be able to bring back other measures if a new variant of COVID-19 that is substantially more contagious or with even more serious health impacts arrives in New Zealand.

Vulnerable communities are encouraged to continue to keep up to date with their vaccinations, including boosters; access free RATs; and talk to their healthcare provider to see if they are eligible for antiviral prescriptions.

**Q: Where can I go for more information about the new rules?**

A: The Unite against Covid website (covid19.govt.nz) and the Ministry of Health (health.govt.nz) website are being updated.

**Q: What is the modelling on the impact of these changes, on cases, hospitalisations and deaths?**

A: Modelling was undertaken for a range of scenarios, focused on the changes in mask and self-isolation requirements. All scenarios were generally similar to our current trajectory, with small increases in hospital bed admissions and daily deaths, but still much smaller than recent peaks. Modelling always includes many assumptions, including how effective current measures are at reducing transmission.

**Q: What support for business, such as the leave support scheme, will remain?**

A: The Leave Support, Small Business Cashflow Loan and Event Transition schemes remain available to those eligible, you can find more information on the [business.govt.nz website.](https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.business.govt.nz%2Fcovid-19%2Ffinancial-support-for-businesses%2F&data=05%7C01%7CRebecca.Thomson%40dpmc.govt.nz%7C0efff21dec8344473a1a08da907ec05b%7Ceea6053309ef4b7a94060f38551cc613%7C0%7C0%7C637981171342914563%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=4F%2FWEeeSq4butf3e24MilD5frvfhxol7D9%2Fi9LmRFk8%3D&reserved=0)

**Q: What support will there be for individuals and their family/whānau if they become unwell?**

A: As has been the case through the Omicron outbreak, many people with COVID-19 will have only mild symptoms and will be able to safely self-isolate in the community to ensure our hospitals are available for those who really need them.

Care in the Community will continue to ensure that supports are available for low-income households impacted by COVID-19 to recover quickly.

Shifting to the new approach and the removal of measures, including the requirement for household contacts to isolate, will likely reduce the number of households requiring assistance.

The Care in the Community framework provides central guidance to ensure that people with COVID-19 receive the support they need through a regionally coordinated, locally led approach.

# COVID-19 Protection Framework

**Q: What is happening?**

From 11:59pm 12 September 2022, the COVID-19 Protection Framework will end.

**Q: Why is this happening?**

A: The COVID-19 Protection Framework was designed to operate with COVID-19 circulating in the community, slowing the spread of the virus through our highly vaccinated population and protecting our vulnerable populations and health system. We adjusted the COVID-19 Protection Framework so that it was appropriate for the management of Omicron, ensuring that while our health system faced significant pressure it was not overwhelmed through winter. Post-winter, with cases low, is the right time to remove the CPF and safely move to a long-term, sustainable way of managing the pandemic.

**Q: What is the public health advice for ending the CPF?**

A: The public health advice is that some measures are still needed to protect vulnerable communities and the health system. Therefore, important aspects of the response will continue to keep vulnerable New Zealanders safe. These include the continued isolation of positive cases and mask requirements in many healthcare settings (including aged residential care). Additionally, all New Zealanders continue to be encouraged to practice good health behaviours to keep themselves, and their communities, safe. Importantly, we will be able to bring back other measures if a new variant of COVID-19 that is substantially more contagious or with even more serious health impacts arrives in New Zealand.

**Q: Why didn’t we just go to Green, which has no restrictions?**

A: Public health advice is that some measures are still needed to protect vulnerable communities and the health system, including mask requirements in some healthcare settings. Green would have removed all mask-wearing requirements.

# Isolation

**Q: What is happening?**

From 11:59pm 12 September 2022 Household Contacts, including those who have not had COVID-19 in the past 90 days, do not need to isolate for 7 days. Instead, household contacts are recommended to test daily for 5 days from when the case in their household tests positive, and wear a mask when they are out. If they subsequently test positive they will be considered a ‘case’ and be required to complete 7 days of isolation.

People with COVID-19 must continue to self-isolate for 7 days.

**Q: Why is this happening?**

A: Removing the requirement to automatically isolate for household contacts will reduce disruption, particularly on larger households. Given the current outbreak context, overseas experience and on the basis of proportionality, recommended daily negative testing of household contacts is considered enough to minimise the risk.

**Q: Who is a household contact?**

A: You are a household contact if you live with or have spent a night or day (more than 8 hours) with someone who tests positive for COVID-19.

The Government has announced household contacts of a confirmed case of COVID-19 will no longer need to isolate with them. Instead, the household contacts should test daily for five days.

If any of the daily results are positive, the household contact will need to isolate for seven days from that point.

There are no changes for anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19. The seven-day isolation requirement remains in place for cases.

**Detailed advice for household contacts**

* If you live with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 then you no longer need to isolate with them. Instead, you should test daily for five days and wear a mask when you are out. If any result is positive, then you must isolate for seven days.
* Whether positive or negative you should report the results of your RATs. You can do this through [My Covid Record](https://mycovidrecord.health.nz/) or call 0800 222 478.
* You should avoid or minimise contact with the person with COVID-19 during their isolation period.
* To protect yourself, your whānau, and your community it’s important to keep up the healthy habits that we know. Get vaccinated and boosted, and stay home when you are unwell.
* If you develop COVID-19 like symptoms at any time, or are unwell, test and stay at home until 24 hours after your symptoms resolve. If positive you will need to isolate for seven days.
* You can get free rapid antigen tests (RATs) from a range of locations, collection sites, marae and some pharmacies. Find out where to get a test at [Rapid antigen testing (RAT) | Ministry of Health NZ](https://www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/covid-19-testing/rapid-antigen-testing-rat#general_public) or by calling 0800 222 478.

**Q: What does the public health advice say about the impact of this change?**

A: While an increase in cases may occur as a result of these changes, recommended daily testing is considered enough to minimise the risk. With household contacts not being required to isolate and just encouraged to test, it is expected workforce disruptions caused by the virus will decrease, not increase.

**Q: What happens for people who are already isolating when this change comes into effect**?

A: Positive cases must continue to isolate for 7 days. Household contacts isolating can follow the new self-isolation guidelines on 13 September. If they test negative and are asymptomatic, they do not need to self-isolate.

**Q: Will single parents still be able to drop their children off at school, if isolating?**

A: Although we don’t generally encourage people to leave their house while isolating with COVID-19, there are some exceptional circumstances where people may need to. In circumstances where the isolating adult is the only person available to drop off and pick up their child from school they will be able to do so, but we expect them to wear a mask and practice physical distancing. This is only the case for attending school, and is not recommended for taking children to friends’ houses, extracurricular activities, or picking up groceries.

**Q. Do students / staff have to disclose to the school that they are a Household Contact?**

A: Students and staff will not be required to disclose whether they’re a household contact.

**Q. Do I have to disclose to my employer that I’m a household contact?**

A: Employees need to act in good faith ([Good faith » Employment New Zealand](https://www.employment.govt.nz/resolving-problems/employer-and-employee-must-dos/good-faith/)) in all dealings with their employers, which includes being responsive and communicative, and not acting in a misleading or deceptive way.

While employees should disclose that they are a household contact, this does not require them to self-isolate. However, an employer and employee should discuss how they will approach this situation including whether additional risk-management actions are appropriate or where the employee wishes to work from home for [health and safety reasons](https://www.employment.govt.nz/workplace-policies/coronavirus-workplace/health-safety-concerns/).

**Q: Apart from daily testing, what else do household contacts have to do?**

A: By taking a daily RAT for 5 days and returning a negative result, household contacts are unlikely to be capable of passing on the virus. They present no greater risk to the community than any other person. Provided the test is negative they can go about their usual business, but are recommended to wear a mask.

**Q: What does a household contact do if they test negative?**

A: If they test negative and are asymptomatic, they do not need to self-isolate.

If they test negative but have COVID-19 symptoms they should stay at home. Anyone feeling unwell should stay home until they feel better and avoid contact with people who are vulnerable to COVID-19. They should retest every day while their symptoms continue, up to 5 days.

**Q: What does a household contact do if they test positive?**

A: If your result is positive, then you must isolate as a case for seven days (from the date your symptoms developed or the date of your first positive test, whichever comes first)**.**

**Q. What should I do if I test negative on my last day of testing but start to feel unwell?**

A: If a test on any of the 5 days is negative, but the household contact presents with COVID-19 symptoms, the advice is to stay at home. Anyone feeling unwell should stay home until they feel better and avoid contact with people who are vulnerable to COVID-19. It is recommended that people continue to test for COVID-19 during this time.

**Q. How will you monitor whether people are testing? Is it mandatory to test?**

A. It is not mandatory to test, it is a recommendation to limit the spread of COVID-19 to others in the community. As long as the household contact tests negative and has no symptoms, they do not need to isolate. It is also important that Household Contacts who have COVID-19 symptoms stay home regardless of the result of their RAT. This additional precaution reduces the likelihood of further transmission should they be in the early stages of COIVD-19 disease.

**Q. What if a household contact is unable or unwilling to test daily?**

A. Daily testing is recommended not required. Household contacts who are unable or unwilling to test are recommended to stay home for five days.

**Q. What is happening with the Close Contact Exemption Scheme?**

A: As household contacts will no longer be required to isolate, this scheme will end.

**Q: Are RATs still free for the public?**

A: Yes.

**Q: Will the same number of testing/collections sites remain?**

A: The number and location of the CTC/collection sites is defined by the districts based on operational activity and identified demand. The network of CTC/collection sites, and changes to this network, can be found on [Healthpoint.](https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/covid-19/?covidTesting=rats)

**Q: When can people with COVID-19 who have been self-isolating return to work?**

A: After finishing their 7 days of isolation.

# Vaccine mandates

**Q: What is happening?**

A: The remaining vaccine mandates, namely those for the health and disability sector, are being removed effective from 11:59pm, 26 September. Some employers may still require workers to be vaccinated due to their responsibilities under health and safety legislation.

**Q: Why is this happening?**

A: COVID-19 vaccination rates among our health workforce are very high, and the public health advice is that there is no longer a rationale for continued mandates for the sector. It was in place to help prevent transmission between workers and vulnerable people they look after, and workers in public-facing jobs. Since then, there have been changes in population immunity, very high vaccination rates among the affected workforce, and COVID-19 variants which have all had an impact on the risk of COVID-19 infection.

**Q: Can employers still require COVID-19 vaccination?**

A: Workplaces may still consider that a vaccination requirement is possible based on a work health and safety assessment. Given the public health advice, it is appropriate that these decisions are made by workplaces based on specific circumstances not by the Government.

WorkSafe advises that employers should take care when considering measures such as requiring employees to be vaccinated or asymptomatic testing of employees for surveillance reasons.

Employers should complete a risk assessment and must engage with workers and their representatives in good faith. This includes when they are developing, implementing or reviewing an employer vaccination requirement or other COVID-19 controls.

**Q: Does this increase the risk for vulnerable people?**

A: COVID-19 vaccination rates among our health workforce are very high, and the public health advice is that there is no longer a rationale for continued mandates for the sector. It was in place to help prevent transmission between workers and vulnerable people they look after, and workers in public-facing jobs. Since then, there have been changes in population immunity, very high vaccination rates among the affected workforce, and COVID-19 variants which have all had an impact on the risk of COVID-19 infection.

Vulnerable communities are encouraged to keep up to date with their vaccinations, including boosters; access free RATs; and talk to their healthcare provider to see if they are eligible for anti-viral prescriptions.

**Q: Will further boosters become more widely available to people?**

A: The Ministry of Health’s COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Advisory Group will continue to review new information on COVID-19 and vaccines and will make further recommendations on eligibility criteria as necessary.

# Mask wearing

**Q: What is happening?**

A: From 11:59pm 12 September 2022 all mask requirements will be removed, except for visitors in some healthcare settings.

**Q: Why is this happening?**

A: Retaining masks for visitors in certain healthcare facilities (including primary care, urgent care, hospitals, pharmacies, aged residential care and disability-related residential care, but excluding counselling, mental health and addition services) will help protect those who are sick and particularly vulnerable.

**Q: Will masks still be encouraged?**

A: The Ministry of Health will also continue to provide guidance on mask use and will continue to encourage them in confined places such as public transport, or when visiting vulnerable people. Full guidance will be available on the Ministry of Health website. Free masks will still be available when collecting RATs.

**Q: What is the public health advice for changing mask wearing requirements?**

A: Masks must be worn by visitors in certain healthcare facilities to protect those who are sick and particularly vulnerable.

**Q: If workers in healthcare settings have to wear masks do they need to be medical grade masks?**

A: Workers in healthcare settings should continue to wear the masks that they are directed to wear by their employers.

**Q: Will medical grade masks be provided free to vulnerable people?**

A: Yes, free medical and P2/N95 particulate respirator face masks will continue to be made available to vulnerable people through participating healthcare providers, community organisations and some rapid antigen test collection sites.

**Q: Will those organisations currently being supplied with masks still be supplied? For how long?**

A: Te Whatu Ora – Health New Zealand’s Central Supply sources and distributes PPE in accordance with the Principles of Supply. Te Whatu Ora will be reviewing the principles in light of the changes to response settings. Should there be any changes to the provision of PPE in the future, this will be consulted and communicated at an appropriate time.

**Q: Does the mask exemption scheme still operate?**

A: Mask exemptions are still in place for locations where people are required by law to wear face masks. For some people it is not suitable for them to wear a face mask because of a physical illness, a mental illness, a condition or a disability. For those people, it is important that they can continue to access the same services as everyone else. The face mask exemption legislation and the official pass that can be shown as proof of exemption, enable them to do this.

**Q: Do mask exemptions apply to places which have retained mask requirements but are not covered by mandated requirements?**

A: The mask exemption pass and other mask exemptions (eg for people under 12) only apply in settings where mask-wearing is mandated by the new mask order. The pass and other exemptions don’t apply when businesses have imposed their own mask requirement (although businesses could still choose to rely on the exemption pass).

**Q: Why do the mask requirements apply to just visitors to hospitals and not patients and healthcare workers too?**

A: The new mask order applies only to visitors to some health care settings. Masks for health and disability care workers are covered by the Ministry of Health Infection Prevention and Control Guidance. This guidance is more nuanced than the visitors’ mask requirements and includes details of the types of masks, face shields and other personal protective equipment that health and disability care workers must use.

 **Q: Why are visitors to counselling, mental health and addiction not required to wear masks by the government?**

A: These types of health services are best placed to set the mask rules for visitors to their premises. The risks due to COVID-19 will depend on their location and their clients. In some instances, the risk will be similar to an office without COVID-19 vulnerable people present. If such services are located within a hospital or other place still covered by mask-wearing requirements, masks must be worn.

**Q. Can employers require mask use?**

A: All mask requirements will be removed, except for visitors in certain healthcare settings and workers in pharmacies.

A business or organisation might require face coverings to be worn by workers for health and safety reasons or as a condition of entry/carriage. If they are requiring masks for health and safety reasons, they should carry out a risk assessment.

A risk assessment should be carried out in good faith. More information can be found on the [WorkSafe](https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/) website.

**Q. Will masks continue to be provided to schools?**

A: Yes – they will continue to be provided to staff and for students/children whose families can’t provide them, until the end of 2022 at this stage.

**Q: Are masks still required on international flights to/from New Zealand?**

A: Masks will not be required by the Government on international flights to or from New Zealand (or domestic flights within New Zealand) after 11:59pm 12 September 2022. Masks may however be required by airlines’ conditions of carriage.

**Q: Can airlines require passengers to wear masks after 12 Sept?**

A: Yes, under their terms of carriage.

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# Border requirements

**Q: What is happening?**

A: From 11:59pm 12 September 2022:

* + travellers arriving in New Zealand will no longer have to test on arrival
	+ travellers arriving at the border by air, including air crew, and at the maritime border will no longer have to prove their vaccination status. Air carriers and maritime vessels can still require evidence of vaccination as a requirement if they choose.
	+ travellers will no longer have to be COVID-19-symptom-free before they travel to New Zealand
	+ travellers can enter New Zealand even if they are subject to a public health direction in another country
	+ air travellers to New Zealand will still need to provide information for contact tracing purposes prior to departure.
	+ International arrivals are recommended to test for COVID-19 on day 0/1 and 5/6 and if symptomatic, and are required to isolate for seven days if positive.

**Q: Why is this happening?**

A: Air crew and arrivals vaccination requirements were introduced in November 2021 in the context of the Delta variant. At that time all arrivals entered MIQ, and the vaccine mandate was an additional tool to reduce transmission and the risk of COVID-19 being introduced into the community. As there is widespread COVID-19 in the community, the vaccine requirement has limited public health benefit in reducing the burden on the health system and is no longer proportionate.

Testing on arrival is no longer required, although it continues to be recommended, and travellers are no longer required to be symptom-free, due to diminished risk that positive cases coming in poses. New Zealand currently has tens of thousands of arrivals a week without seeing a related increase in community cases. Travellers’ details will continue to be recorded for contact tracing purposes in case of new variants.

**Q. Are any travellers to New Zealand required to be vaccinated against COVID-19?**

A: Travellers to New Zealand are no longer required to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

**Q: Can air carriers and maritime vessels, such as cruise ships, still require passengers to be vaccinated?**

A: Yes, if they choose to require vaccination as a condition of carriage.

**Q: What’s the public health advice for allowing symptomatic people to enter New Zealand?**

A: The symptoms for COVID-19 are similar to other conditions, such as hay fever, allergies and the common cold. With COVID-19 cases dropping and a highly vaccinated population, the public health advice is that it is no longer appropriate to prevent them from travel, or require them to get a supervised negative test result or a certificate from a medical professional.

**Q: How does this affect our ability to check for new variants?**

A: Recording of details of everyone entering New Zealand from overseas will continue, along with wastewater testing. Wastewater testing can indicate how much virus is circulating in the community and can detect which variants are in the community. We will also continue to offer follow-up PCR tests to travellers and genome sequence positive cases.

**Q. Will RAT kits still be available at airports?**

Welcome Packs containing Rapid Antigen Test kits are available for collection at Biosecurity.

International arrivals are recommended to test for COVID-19 on day 0/1 and 5/6 and if symptomatic, and required to isolate for seven days if positive.

**Q. What happens if travellers test positive on arrival in New Zealand?**

A. People who test positive for COVID-19 must isolate for seven days.

Household contacts do not need to isolate for 7 days. Instead, household contacts are recommended to test daily for 5 days. They can leave home every day if they test negative.

**Q: Where can visitors go to find out what’s required of them?**

A: Visitors can find information about COVID-19 and what is required of them by visiting COVID19.govt.nz.

# Long Covid

**Q: What is the expected burden of Long Covid?**

A: Although it is difficult to precisely predict the likely burden of long COVID in New Zealand, given the large number of people who have now had COVID-19 in New Zealand this may result in significant impacts to people and the healthcare system over time.

**Q: What are we doing about Long covid?**

A: The Ministry of Health has established a long COVID programme with the goal of disseminating emerging models of care, clinical practice, patient self-management and digital enablement to support patients with long COVID-19 in a New Zealand context.

The programme is based on the following principles:

* giving effect to our obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi, including considering the interests and needs of Māori
* ensuring equity, which involves inclusiveness for all communities, particularly those most affected by COVID outbreaks i.e Māori and Pacific
* ensuring equity of access to services and outcomes,
* ensuring services are effective, timely and reflects best-practice as the evidence emerges
* ensuring services are patient centred, including patient self-management and digital enablement to support patients with Long COVID
* long COVID symptoms are investigated, treated, and funded in the same way as other long-term conditions.

Within the work programme, four workstreams are underway to support the development of the long COVID rehabilitation and service delivery guidance within an Aotearoa New Zealand context:

* Development of a service development toolkit (also known as a change package), including monitoring health districts with existing specific services for long COVID
* Establishing an expert advisory group to provide guidance and input into the long COVID rehabilitation guideline, with broad representation from Māori, Pacific peoples, researchers, clinicians, service providers and people with lived experience.
* Monitoring emerging evidence to inform clinical pathways to identify and manage long COVID
* Ongoing research to identify gaps that are particular to Aotearoa New Zealand and how options for how they might be addressed.

The Ministry has published revised guidelines for the acute phase of rehabilitation for people with or recovering from COVID-19.

* [Guidance for the Acute Phase of Rehabilitation of People with or Recovering from COVID 19 in Aotearoa New Zealand](https://www.health.govt.nz/publication/guidance-acute-phase-rehabilitation-people-or-recovering-covid-19-aotearoa-new-zealand)

A separate programme of work is under way to develop a long COVID rehabilitation and service delivery guideline within an Aotearoa New Zealand context, which will be published later this year.

The Ministry has established the [Long COVID Expert Advisory Group](https://www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/leadership-ministry/expert-groups/long-covid-expert-advisory-group) to assess the evidence on long COVID and apply it to the Aotearoa New Zealand context, to help inform recommendations for clinical practice and guidelines. The group will provide oversight, with broad representation from Māori, Pacifica, researchers consumers, clinicians, and service providers.

Teams within the Ministry of Health also produce a long COVID evidence brief which is updated over time. This document is accessible on the [COVID-19: Science News](https://www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-resources-and-tools/covid-19-science-news#long-covid) page.

The Ministry is also funding research on the Impacts of COVID-19 in Aotearoa study, run by Victoria University of Wellington. This study aims to understand the experiences of people in Aotearoa New Zealand who have had COVID-19 and to learn about the short- and longer-term impacts of COVID-19 on the health and well-being of individuals, whānau and families. There is a particular focus on key subgroups including Māori, Pacific people, people with disabilities (including long COVID), and people who developed COVID-19 through their employment. The outcomes of the study will be used to advise health officials.

The results of this study are being analysed and results are expected later this year.

**Q: How can I avoid Long Covid?**

The best way to prevent long COVID is to prevent infection with COVID-19. Vaccines reduce the risk of long COVID by lowering the chances of getting COVID-19 in the first place. There is also some evidence that vaccination reduces the risk of people who do get COVID-19 going on to develop long COVID.

**Q: What do I do if I think I have Long Covid?**

The long-term physiological and psychological effects of COVID-19 are not yet fully known. However, recovery from viral infections often requires rehabilitation for extended periods of time.

Managing and recovering from long COVID will be different for each person. The severity of symptoms can vary from mild to debilitating and fluctuate over time. In some cases, people begin to feel better before experiencing a return of symptoms such as fatigue.

For support with management and treatment of long COVID symptoms, people should seek the help of their GP or healthcare team, particularly if new symptoms arise or symptoms worsen. If this is not possible, people can also call Healthline on 0800 358 5453 any time.

People can also free call or text 1737 anytime of the day or night to speak with a trained counsellor.