

11 March 2022

Kia ora koutou katoa,

As expected, community transmission of COVID-19 continues to rise across our rohe. Within the past week we have seen notified cases jump from 1890 to 5947 as at today's date. Based on our most recent modelling we are anticipating Hawke's Bay to reach a peak in early April.

While it is an uncertain time for many, it is important to remind ourselves that our health and welfare system has been preparing for this COVID-19 resurgence for quite some time. We are living and working in the midst of a global pandemic where the situation continues to be very fluid, but our preparedness planning means we are ready to tackle this next stage as best we possibly can.

Within our own DHB setting there has been a significant flex-up this week to our hospital COVID response model with the mobilising of Ruakopito as our first COVID ward and the reassigning of Waioha as our dedicated maternity unit for COVID positive māmā, while Ata Rangī is dedicated to COVID negative patients and can support water births. Our COVID Directorate has also faced and overcome logistical challenges with the rollout of Rapid Antigen Tests (RATs) to community collection sites, while vaccinating teams continue the mahi to encourage vaccine uptake.

Our focus now turns firmly to the next phase of our preparedness model which is mobilising both clinical and non-clinical staff into redeployment roles. This has already begun and I encourage any staff member wishing to put their name forward for redeployment, who hasn't already done so, to follow the information provided within this newsletter.

I am heartened by the unity and leadership across our rohe to help ensure communities not only stay well informed, but are preparing for COVID. I would also like to acknowledge our general practice colleagues and welfare locality hub providers for their continued support to those isolating and in need.

Finally, without our people we have nothing. On behalf of myself, our Board and the Executive Leadership Team, the mahi of our DHB workforce is greatly appreciated and is not going unnoticed. To support staff wellbeing during this Omicron outbreak, wellness food parcels will be provided over the next fortnight to ALL teams on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays at every location, starting from next week. I would like to acknowledge the support of the National Chief Executive COVID-19 Oversight Group for helping to make this happen. You can find out more details about how teams can receive their wellness packs within this update.

Take care of yourselves and each other.

Wellness parcels provided from Monday

Staff wellness parcels (containing fruit and treats) will be provided to all DHB teams weeks beginning 14 and 21 March 2022 as follows:

- Parcels will go up with the food trollies to all inpatient areas on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays (lunch and dinner trollies).
- All other Hastings-campus locations are required to send somebody to collect their unit parcel from the West Wing meeting room at lunch time between 12 – 1 pm.
- Wairoa, CHB and Napier Health Centre will be delivered to by normal delivery with other BAU and locality deliveries.
- Slices will be provided over weekends to all staff across 24/7 shifts.

Thank you to our nutrition and food colleagues, orderlies and human resource colleagues for helping to make this happen.

COVID redeployment opportunities underway

As part of the preparation for a surge in COVID-19 cases, ALL employees interested in redeployment opportunities were asked to complete a short survey.

There are clinical, non-clinical, support and non-contact roles that may need to be filled quickly and without much warning. Many staff who completed the survey can expect to be approached over the coming days and weeks ahead. For example, some team members are today being redeployed into the primary care and welfare hub settings.

This work will be paid in accordance with your existing Employment Agreement.

Any staff member who didn't complete the survey, but would like to help, please let your line manager know. Line managers will liaise directly with Megan Pyott who is managing redeployment logistics.

COVID hospitalisation update

Today there are 18 patients with COVID-19 in Hawke's Bay Hospital, down from 21 yesterday. There are no patients requiring intensive care.

Earlier this week significant work was undertaken to mobilise Ruakopito into our dedicated COVID-19 ward with the first patients accepted on Tuesday. When needed, B2 will be stood up. As mentioned earlier, Waioha is managing COVID positive hapū māmā.

While all inpatient admissions are RAT tested for COVID-19, the DHB is also finalising its commencement of inpatient surveillance testing. Surveillance testing adds another layer of protection and provides an opportunity to prevent outbreaks, particularly as community cases continue to rise. Thank you to our clinical teams who are supporting this to get underway.

Self-isolation times and testing update

Government changes to self-isolation times and testing comes into effect at 11:59pm tonight.

This means:

- The isolation period for COVID-19 cases and their household contacts will be reduced from 10 to 7 days.
- Household contacts will need to have a rapid antigen test at day 3 and day 7 of their isolation period. If they become symptomatic, they should also get a test, and if the result is positive, they are required to isolate for 7 days from that point.
- Recovered cases will no longer need to self-isolate if they become a household contact within 90 days after having the virus. This is an increase from the current 28 days.

Guidance for critical healthcare workers who are cases or probable cases have also been updated.

With key information being:

- Critical Healthcare workers who are COVID-19 cases or probable cases may return to work using a 'Test-to-Return' approach, providing they are asymptomatic or mildly symptomatic (and improving) and taking appropriate precautions.

Thank you to Medical Officer of Health Dr Rachel Eyre and Occupational Health Nurse Jane O'Kane for working through this new guidance which we expect the Government will continue to update as the need arises. A staff test to return update is provided below.

All HBDHB staff are considered critical workers and can 'test to return' to work if they are Household contacts.

If you become a [Household Contact](#) and do not have [symptoms](#), you are eligible for the 'test to return' using Rapid Antigen Testing (RATs). To arrange RAT kit collection, call your manager Monday to Friday 8am-5pm. After hours call 027 2012 607. Once arranged, collect your RAT kit from Occupational Health Monday to Friday 8am-5pm or from the EDX Screening Nurse after hours.

If Negative: you can return to work. You must take a test every day before your shift for 7 days AND test on day 10. Be vigilant for symptoms for 10 days.

Please follow these rules to keep your patients and colleagues safe:

- Continue to correctly use a well-fitting fluid resistant medical mask ie surgical mask or N95 depending on your work area.
- Be very careful to keep physically distanced from others if in shared breaks and eating areas.
- Avoid shared transport for work commuting unless it is unmanageable for you to get to work otherwise.
- Be vigilant for symptoms. Stay home if symptoms develop and get a test.
- Outside of work, continue to follow public health instructions for community contacts.

If positive: contact your manager and follow public health advice on isolation requirements.

If you have cold or flu-like [symptoms](#), you must immediately isolate and get tested. Clinical staff must get a PCR test to return to work. Non-clinical staff can use a RAT kit to test to return to work.

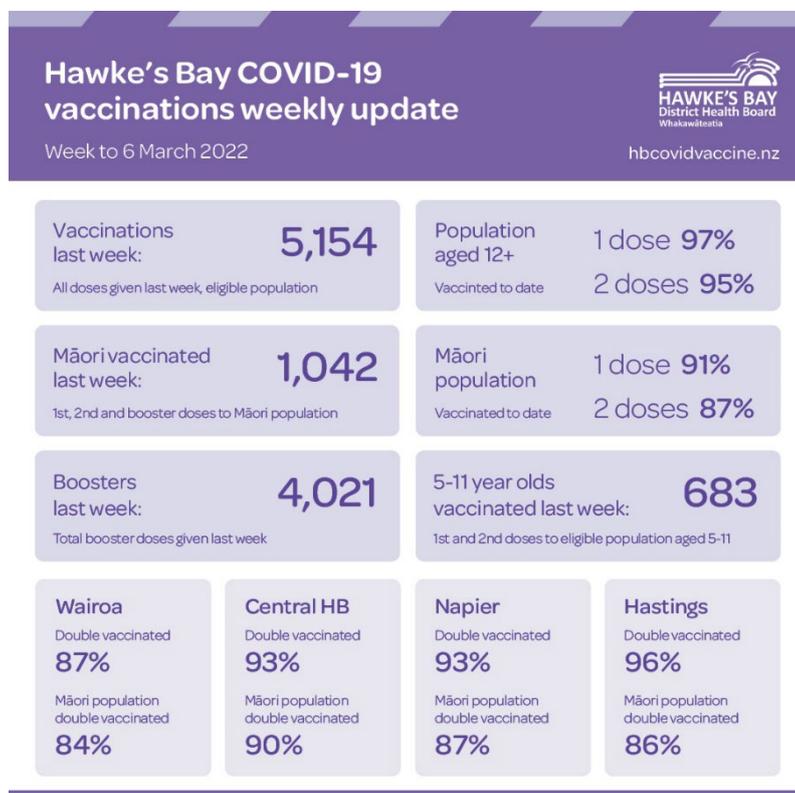
If staff have any COVID-19 related questions, they can call 06 878 8109 and press 9.

*Guidance for managers on the ‘test to return’ process can be found [here](#) and is also attached separately for those who are unable to open the link. Operational managers are also being sent a spreadsheet to support RAT kit distribution to staff.

Vaccination rates

Congratulations to vaccination teams and community vaccinating partners for the mahi leading up to and during the national Super Moko weekend drive last week. Our region came out on top leading statistics with more than 450 vaccinations delivered in the 5-11 year old age group. There was also great uptake of first, second and booster doses in the 12+ group.

There continues to be many opportunities for vaccination across the region. As anticipated, some clinics are scaling back to meet new demand needs. This also frees up team members for redeployment to other areas of need.



From late March, Novavax COVID-19 vaccine (Nuvaxovid) will also be available as a new COVID-19 vaccine at selected clinics. Novavax is the first protein-based COVID-19 vaccine to be approved for use in New Zealand. The vaccine is for adults aged 18 and above who wish to have a different COVID-19 vaccine option. You can read more about the vaccine here: <https://www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-vaccines/covid-19-vaccines-getting-novavax>

My thanks to all those people, our community partners and Iwi working so very hard to protect our community across a variety of vaccine clinics, pharmacy and in GP clinics.

Kia kaha,
Keriana



Keriana Brooking

Chief Executive Officer