

# Covid 19 update

**We move to phase 2 of our Omicron response at 11.59 pm, Tuesday 15 February.**

Do we remember the days when we could walk into a supermarket with a smile instead of a mask?



Or as it may be remembered, “When I was your age...”

We all have been dealing with the frustration, fear, and uncertainty that the pandemic of the Covid 19 virus, and its mutations, has brought with it. The confusion for many of us starts with the names and being able to link what is being talked about back to Covid 19.

The various mutations or variants, which are simply different forms of the Covid 19 virus, have different names as the virus has changed in some way. Covid 19, Delta, and Omicron are currently the names we have heard in New Zealand for variants of Covid 19.

We are experiencing constant changes as the needs of the world, and for us, New Zealand moves along in this journey. Keeping up with the most current guidelines can be challenging and confusing as levels, traffic lights and phases morph into each other.

Remember, you are not alone in this confusion. The pace of changes has often been quick and it is easy to lose track of it all. Especially with the everyday complexities of life that existed before Covid 19 still being at the forefront of our day-to-day focus.

The best way to get the correct, most up-to-date information about what is happening with Covid 19 is via the [Ministry of Health](#) (MOH) website.

With [Omicron](#) being the latest mutation to arrive in New Zealand in November 2021 the country has moved to a phase system. The reason for this change is due to this variant being more easily spread and it can spread around to other people quicker than the variants that were before it.

The phase system that has been currently set up for Omicron can be found on the [MOH website](#). It consists of 3 phases.

According to the [MOH website](#), the 3 phases look like this

## Phases One

This is used when we have some cases in the community but we are still able to control it.

In this phase

**Testing** is done for people that have [symptoms](#), if you are a [close contact](#) or if you are going on an international flight. Testing can currently be done at GP or testing [centers](#)

**Case investigations:** Positive cases are identified via a positive test. Cases are contacted via phone call and questions are asked over the phone to investigate that case.

**Contact tracing:** close contacts of positive cases are identified and [managed](#), and close contacts are notified by phone calls. Use of QR scanning and signing in, Bluetooth, and locations of interest are used to identify close contacts.

**Isolation and quarantine** for positive cases are for 14 days. For Close contacts, isolation is for 10 days.

**Health and social support.** Care in the community begins to move towards self-care with text and online support. Clinical care is provided by primary care teams. Support to assist positive cases to isolate where they usually live, with some alternative accommodation options being available around the regions.

## Phase Two

This is when positive cases have spread in the community. We are working on minimizing and slowing the spread of the virus. This is to help protect our vulnerable communities.

**Testing** for [symptomatic](#) people

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- Rapid Antigen Tests (RAT) may be used in addition to PCR testing for symptomatic people and close contacts
- [Critical worker close contact exemption scheme begins](#) asymptomatic healthcare and critical workforce who are close contacts test daily using RATs.
- PCR testing to confirm the diagnosis if positive RAT.



## Case investigation and contact tracing

**Digital technology is utilized more as cases grow – text via mobile phone and information via email. Support for those not digitally enabled.**

Cases:

- Identified via positive PCR test
- Notified by text and directed to complete COVID-19 Contact Tracing form online Self-investigation tool increasingly targeting high-risk exposures (events or locations)
- Phone-based interviews where required
- Household contacts identified, the test required
- Cases are required to advise contacts and employers of positive status.

Contacts:

- Regular communication with household contacts
- Close contacts notified via text, directed to a website, test on day 5 (non-household contacts self-manage)
- Push notifications (QR scanning), Bluetooth, and Locations of Interest used to identify contacts
- [Close Contact Exemption Scheme](#) using RATS for critical infrastructure workers if needed.



## Isolation and quarantine

Cases:

- Isolate for 10 days

Household contacts of a Case:

- Isolate until Case completes 10 days. Test Day 3 and Day 8

Close contacts:

- Isolate for 7 days. Test Day 5
- Extra support in place for health and critical workforces.

Contacts:

- Isolate for 7 days.
- Extra support in place for health and critical workforces.



## Health and social support – care in the community

- **Cases using self-service where possible, ensure those with the greatest need are being met**
- Support by local care coordination hub for those with a need for ongoing clinical care.

- Other people with lower clinical risks, may contact external providers.
- Support for most positive cases to isolate in their usual place of residence. Alternative accommodation options across the regions are still available.

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Protecting in all phases

Explaining testing

MOH <https://www.health.govt.nz/>

Omicron <https://www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/about-covid-19/covid-19-about-omicron-variant>

Covid 19 site <https://covid19.govt.nz/testing-and-tracing/contact-tracing/close-contacts/#who-is-a-close-contact>