



# GUIDANCE, AT ALERT LEVEL 3

FOR PEOPLE AT RISK OF SEVERE ILLNESS BECAUSE OF AGE AND/OR EXISTING AND UNDERLYING HEALTH CONDITIONS

## LIST OF RELEVANT HEALTH CONDITIONS

Relevant conditions include:

- chronic renal failure
- coronary heart disease or congestive cardiac failure
- chronic lung disease (severe asthma (for which frequent medical consultations or the use of multiple medications is required), cystic fibrosis, bronchiectasis, suppurative lung disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, chronic emphysema)
- poorly controlled diabetes
- poorly controlled hypertension

People at any age with significant immunosuppression, as defined as:

- Haematologic neoplasms: leukemias, lymphomas, myelodysplastic syndromes
- Post-transplant: solid organ (on immunosuppressive therapy), haematopoietic stem cell transplant (within 24 months or on treatment for GVHD)
- Immunocompromised due to primary or acquired immunodeficiency (including HIV infection)
- Current chemotherapy or radiotherapy
- High-dose corticosteroids ( $\geq 20$  mg of prednisone per day, or equivalent) for  $\geq 14$  days
- All biologics and most disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDs) as defined as follows:
  - Azathioprine  $> 3.0$  mg/kg/day
  - 6-Mercaptopurine  $> 1.5$  mg/kg/day
  - Methotrexate  $> 0.4$  mg/kg/week
  - Prednisone  $> 20$  mg/day. If  $< 14$  days treatment, can resume work when treatment ceased
  - Tacrolimus (any dose)
  - Cyclosporine (any dose)
  - Cyclophosphamide (any dose)
  - Mycophenolate (any dose)
  - Combination (multiple) DMARDs irrespective of dose

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# Alert Level 3 Fact Sheet

For people at risk of severe illness from COVID-19 due to age, and / or existing and underlying health conditions

For people aged 70 and over, and others with existing medical conditions, there are additional risks should we be exposed to COVID-19. People need to weigh up these risks against being able to live our lives as normally as possible and enjoying safe activities under Alert Level 3. Some of us are at more risk than others because we have certain health conditions (which we may not even be aware of) that mean we are at severe risk of severe illness should we get COVID-19.

At Level 3 we still need to continue to reduce our contact with others outside our bubbles as there is still a risk the virus can get out of control. We should work with our GPs if we need further help understanding our own levels of risk.

We need to continue to stay at home other than for essential personal movement – like accessing essential services, health care, work (if it is not possible to work from home), and for permitted travel and recreation.

## Essential Services

It is still best to access services without leaving our homes if possible, things like internet shopping and deliveries should continue. When we do go out, we need to practice social distancing (keeping 2 metres apart) and good hygiene (avoid touching surfaces, hand washing, cough etiquette).

## Work

We can go to work if we can't work from home. If we go to work, we will need to ensure our workplaces have arrangements in place to keep us safe. These arrangements need to be discussed and agreed with your employer and acceptable to both parties. Options for managing your health and safety might include working at times where there are fewer other workers around, increased physical distancing where possible, additional protective measures or equipment, or undertaking duties with lower levels of customer interaction (in the office, rather than the frontline). If we can't safely work at our workplace, and can't work from home, we need to agree what our leave from work and pay arrangements will be with our employer.

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## Extended Bubbles

Level 3 also means you can expand your bubble a small amount to bring in local close family / whānau, isolated people or caregivers. Bubbles need to remain small, exclusive, and local.

## Travel and Recreation

We can now travel regionally, but only when it is necessary. Funerals / tangihanga can now go ahead, but no more than 10 people can attend, and we need to practice physical distancing.

We know exercise is important, and some of the restrictions on these activities have been lifted – we can now swim and fish from the shore.

Remember - regularly disinfect surfaces; wash and dry your hands, cough into your elbow, don't touch your face; stay home if you're sick, and get tested for COVID-19 if you have flu like symptoms.

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# FAQs about Alert Level 3

For people at risk of severe illness from COVID-19 due to age, and / or existing and underlying health conditions.

## Personal movement

### Can I get food or essential items for myself?

People at risk of severe illness (including older people) are encouraged to stay home where possible.

Food delivery services are already available, and some food takeaways will be available for delivery under Level 3. You can also ask friends or family to help deliver food to you.

If you need to leave home for groceries or other essential services, take additional precautions when leaving home.

That includes:

- Keep 2 metres away from others
- Avoid touching surfaces and wash your hands before and after you shop
- Come prepared with a list so you shop as quickly as possible
- If possible, only send one person from your household to do the whole shop
- Consider delivery or click and collect options to limit your contact with other people.

### What can I do outside the house?

You might be tempted to leave the house but remember, staying home is the best thing you can do to stop the spread of COVID-19. You can leave the house to buy groceries, access essential services like healthcare, pick up essential medicines, or to get some fresh air/exercise.

Under Level 3, you can also travel to go to work if you are working and cannot do your job from home, or to access essential local services.

You are also allowed to travel to attend permitted gatherings of up to 10 people for wedding services, funerals and tangihanga.

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### **Can I interact with others outside my bubble?**

You should only have physical contact with people in your bubble. Bubbles can be expanded under Level 3, for example you might want to consider extending your bubble to reconnect with family or whānau, or to bring in caregivers that you need. Keep it exclusive and keep it small.

### **I live on my own – can I create a bubble with another person?**

If you live alone, you can expand this bubble to reconnect with close family or whānau, to bring in caregivers, or support isolated people who live within your region. All extended bubbles must remain exclusive.

### **What do I do if I feel unsafe in my bubble?**

It is okay to ask for help if you or someone else is in danger. If you think someone could be harmed or may harm themselves, call the Police on [111](tel:111), even if you're not sure.

You can also call, email or text the Elder Abuse Helpline – a 24-hour service answered by registered nurses who can connect to local elder abuse specialist providers.

You can call [0800 32 668 65](tel:08003266865) (0800 EA NOT OK), text 5032 or email [support@elderabuse.nz](mailto:support@elderabuse.nz)

### **Where can I get personal health information about what is safe for me to do?**

If you are unsure about what activities outside the home might be safe for you given your individual health circumstances, you can call your GP or Healthline for advice.

## **Recreation**

### **Can I go outside to exercise?**

Yes you can. You can exercise in your local area, or you can drive to a nearby area to go for a walk or bike ride, for example to a beach that is in your region. This could mean travelling to a nearby beach or park if it is still within a close distance to your home.

While exercising make sure to take precautions including keeping a 2-metre distance from other people.

If you are unwell, do not go outside.

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## How far can I go outside to exercise?

You should stay as close to home as you can, and still do the activity.

## Workers

### Can I go back to work?

You must work from home if you can. If you cannot work from home, you should agree with your employer what measures will be put in place to manage your health and safety. If you and your employer agree that you should not come to work during this period, and you cannot work from home, then you and your employer should discuss and agree what leave from work and pay arrangements apply. This could be a mixture of paid leave types (eg annual leave, special paid leave) or unpaid leave.

Workplaces must operate safely for everyone – eliminating the risk of spreading COVID-19 wherever possible. If it's not possible to eliminate the risk, then minimise it as much as possible by thinking about all the types of actions you could take. Your employer could consider making changes, isolating workers, limiting interaction between groups of workers, recording who is working together, disinfecting surfaces, and maintaining high hygiene standards, as well as physical distancing between workers and with any customers allowed on premises. Some essential services are permitted that include close personal contact between workers and others – eg in aged care or hospitals. In these types of roles, and those which are allowed that involve customers (such as supermarkets and buses), you should discuss with your employer if additional measures are warranted to keep you healthy and safe.

The Government has established a leave scheme to provide financial assistance to workers who are not able to work. Your employer can apply for this. See:

<https://www.employment.govt.nz/leave-and-holidays/other-types-of-leave/coronavirus-workplace/>

### I'm 70 (or over 70) and employed. Do I have to go back to work if I'm concerned about contracting COVID-19?

You need to discuss this with your employer and you should agree with them whether you will return to work, whether you can work from home, and what leave and pay arrangements will apply. For more information about working, you can go to:

<https://www.employment.govt.nz/leave-and-holidays/other-types-of-leave/coronavirus-workplace/> and <https://worksafe.govt.nz>.

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## **If I go back to work, what extra safety precautions should I take? Will testing be available to me?**

Extra precautions could include working a different roster where there are fewer workers on and the ability for greater distancing, undertaking different duties that require less interaction with others, or using additional barriers or protective equipment.

Testing is available as for all others – you can find more information about this here:

<https://covid19.govt.nz/covid-19/about-covid-19/covid-19-testing/>

## **Can I continue to volunteer outside of the home?**

Limiting our interactions with others is our best defence against COVID-19. Make sure to stay in your household bubbles whenever you are not at work, school, buying the groceries or exercising. If your volunteer work means you can't do this at home, and the organisation you volunteer for is able to keep you safe (e.g. you can practice social distancing) then you could do this.

## **Health**

### **Can I access my GP or other health practitioner in person?**

You can still visit your doctor, nurse or other essential health professional in person but where possible you should use virtual, non-contact consultations. Make sure to call them first to see if you can have your appointment over the phone.

### **Do I need a mask/gloves when I go out/to work – will this be supplied?**

PPE will only be necessary in the same workplaces as it was before COVID-19, like hospitals. Most workers will not need PPE. Otherwise basic hygiene measures are the most important way to stop the spread of COVID-19.

That includes:

- hand hygiene – that is, washing hands regularly with soap and water, or cleansing with hand sanitiser if not possible to wash your hands
- staying at home if you are sick
- coughing or sneezing into a tissue or your elbow and then performing hand hygiene
- cleaning surfaces regularly.

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### **Can the person I support start going to their day programme again?**

No. You can only be in physical contact with people in your bubble.

### **Can my in-home care services resume?**

Essential personal care services, such as toileting, washing and feeding, are provided as usual. Some home help, such as house cleaning, may be available, depending on individual circumstances. People providing these services must follow Alert Level 3 precautions, such as good hand hygiene and physical distancing of 2 metres.

Urgent disability related equipment will also be provided.

### **Can I access other health services like my dentist or optometrist?**

Pharmacies remain open. Pharmacies will use telehealth for medicine management where possible and may deliver medications for vulnerable groups.

All routine care dentistry will remain suspended. Face-to-face appointments for urgent/emergency care may be provided so long as dental professionals can take appropriate measures to manage public health risks.

Community allied health professions (eg, physiotherapy, podiatry, optometry) and Well Child Tamariki Ora will continue to use virtual appointments where possible. Face-to-face appointments for urgent cases only may be provided so long as professionals can take appropriate measures to manage public health risks.

## **Community Health Services**

### **Can I get a Flu Shot?**

Yes. Flu shots are available free for people over 65 at doctor's surgeries and some local pharmacies.

You should:

- Phone ahead to make an appointment
- Find out about any infection control measures to follow during your visit
- Stay two metres away from anyone other than the healthcare professional giving the vaccination
- Maintain good hygiene practices at all time.

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## **Gatherings**

### **If I practice physical distancing can I now meet up with my book club/bridge club/walking group?**

No. Only permitted gatherings are allowed under Alert Level 3. Those are, wedding services, funerals and tangihanga, of up to 10 people.

If possible, use video calls through tools like FaceTime or Zoom to keep in contact with your social groups.

### **Can I go to a funeral?**

Up to 10 people can gather for a funeral. Those who do attend must keep themselves and others safe by staying at least 2 metres apart and washing hands regularly.

### **Can I drive my car?**

Yes, but travel is still restricted and is only allowed for permitted movement in your local region.

### **Can I attend carer support groups in my local area?**

No. You can only be in physical contact with people in your bubble.

### **Can I go to someone's house for dinner?**

No. You should only leave your house for essential movement like accessing essential services, work, or permitted gatherings.

### **Can I visit a family member or friend who is dying or in aged residential care, a hospice, hospital, or in disability residential care?**

For guidance on visiting family or friends in these circumstances you can find more information here: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-current-situation/health-and-disability-services-alert-level-3/alert-level-3-questions-and-answers>

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## Essential services

**I've already been in lock down longer than other people - what services are available to me? Can I get my haircut?**

Older people and people with certain existing health conditions (that may put them at risk of severe illness should they have COVID-19), are encouraged to stay home whenever they are not at work, buying the groceries or exercising. Hairdressing is not considered as an essential activity because social distancing is not able to be maintained.

**Can I use cash or cheques to pay for things? Can I visit the Post Office to pay my bills?**

You can still use cash and cheques to pay for things but where possible, use contactless payments like PayWave.

You can also safely do most of your banking over the phone without paying any fees, depending on the type of account you have. You will need to contact your bank to set this up.

**ANZ** 0800 269 296

**ASB** 0800 803 804 (General enquiries), 0800 272 119 (priority line for over 70s)

**BNZ** 0800 275 269

**Heartland Bank Limited** 0800 85 20 20

**HSBC** 0800 80 23 80

**Kiwibank** 0800 113 355

**Southland Building Society** 0800 727 2265

**The Co-operative Bank Limited** 0800 554 554

**TSB Bank Limited** 0800 872 226

**Westpac New Zealand Limited** 0800 400 600

Some New Zealand Post outlets will reopen at Level 3. Opening hours under Alert Level 3 may vary from standard opening hours. For the most up to date information on opening hours please check the NZ Post website: <https://www.nzpost.co.nz/tools/postshop-kiwibank-locator>. New Zealand Post Box Lobbies will remain open but with reduced operating hours.

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**I don't have an internet connection; how will I get information around COVID-19?**

Listen to your radio (Radio NZ) and watch your television. You can listen/watch the daily updates on TV One at 1 pm each day.

**I previously had my meals delivered, will this service start again?**

Yes, so long as delivery can be contactless (for instance if the meals are dropped off on your doorstep).

**How can I learn to do things online?**

SeniorNet and Age Concern both run workshops to help older people feel confident online.

You can find out more:

SeniorNet- [www.seniornet.co.nz](http://www.seniornet.co.nz)

Age Concern- [www.ageconcern.org.nz](http://www.ageconcern.org.nz)

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