

## Information for people who receive hospice care in the home

16 April 2020

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance and information for people who receive hospice care in the home and community settings to reduce the impact and spread of COVID-19.

Stay up to date with COVID-19 developments in New Zealand on the [Ministry of Health COVID-19 website](#) and the [Unite Against COVID-19 website](#)

### How to protect yourself from the virus

If you are vulnerable it is especially important to reduce contact and protect yourself from the virus. You should:

- Stay at home as much as possible
- When you go out in public, limit close contact with other people
- Wash your hands regularly or use hand sanitiser
- If you live with a person who is self-isolating, look at alternative accommodation arrangements for them where possible
- Avoid shared/public transportation.

### Essential services

Any workers providing direct hands-on support that maintains a person's necessities of life, including physical wellbeing and safety in a residential or home community setting, are considered essential. Palliative care is therefore essential and must continue to be available during elevated (3 and 4) Alert Levels.

Funding for palliative care will continue throughout elevated (3 and 4) Alert Levels.

### Changes for palliative care during elevated Alert Levels

To address the greater risk of transmission of COVID-19 for palliative care services, the following steps will be put in place when at elevated (3 and 4) Alert Levels:

- Non-essential services to stop:
  - Household management where not essential to maintain client wellbeing
  - Social connection visits
- In all care settings, clients of non-residential services will be asked to contact families and whānau for support, digital and phone social connection and accommodation where possible.
- When not urgent, families must cancel planned respite. You should only take urgent respite to:
  - avoid admission to a DHB
  - where essential care cannot be provided at home
  - or if carers or family members are sick or in isolation

- Re-assessments will take place by phone or online platforms, where required, to ensure risks levels are current.

## Have a plan if you, or your health workers, get sick

- If you do not have one already, develop a plan for what you will do if people you rely on for support become sick.
- Talk to people who need to be included in your plan: household members, neighbours, relatives, whānau, friends, support service providers and support workers.
- Work out who can provide you with support if your usual support people get sick.
- Your hospice will let you know if your usual hospice worker is sick and will arrange another health worker to support you. If you have concerns about care, contact your hospice directly.

## What to do if you are self-isolating and have a hospice worker coming to the home

Even though you are self-isolating, you can still receive your essential support, with the appropriate infection control measures. Infection control measures are to protect you, your hospice worker, and other people.

- Advise your hospice by phone that you are self-isolating because you may have COVID-19. They will do an assessment to work out what infection control measures they need to take when visiting you.
- When your hospice workers visit you:
  - Ensure there is somewhere that they can wash their hands
  - Maintain a distance of 2 metres from them if possible
  - advise other members of your home to stay in another room.
- If you have hospice workers who provide personal care and you can't stay more than 2 metres away from them, your hospice worker may wear one or more of these forms of personal protective equipment:
  - Gloves
  - surgical face mask
  - disposable, fluid resistant gown
  - eye protection
- If you need protective equipment - like a mask, gloves, gown or eye protection – it will be provided by your hospice.

## Family visitors

Given that people might be visiting loved ones in their last days or hours, we appreciate that in an end of life care situation, contact is important for close family and friends. The risk to the person who is dying is minimal, however there is a risk of transmission to other people who subsequently have contact with the person at the end of life and after their death (including nursing, medical staff, funeral directors and clergy). We therefore recommend that:

- Families should advise all visitors and staff to stay away from the home if they have cold or flu symptoms.
- Visitors should also stay away if in self-isolation, if they have been overseas to any country or if they have been in close contact with someone confirmed with COVID-19 in the last 14 days.
- Visitors should stay away for 14 days from their arrival date or date of close contact with the person who has been confirmed with COVID-19.

Information about exemptions for travel on compassionate grounds can be found on the [Unite Against COVID-19 website](#).

## Taking care of your wellbeing

Your emotional and mental health is important. It is normal to feel stressed or lonely when self-isolating, but there are some things you can do to feel better.

- Reach out to your usual support, like family, whānau and friends and talk about how you feel.
- We recommend sticking to a routine such as having regular mealtimes, bedtimes and exercising.
- If you feel you are not coping, it is important to talk with someone. For support with grief, anxiety, distress or mental wellbeing, you can call or text 1737 to talk with a trained counsellor. You can also find additional resource on the MOH website <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-health-advice-general-public/covid-19-mental-health-and-wellbeing-resources>

## Slight Differences to this Document

At Waipuna Hospice we meet Ministry of Health standards related to Covid-19, however there are a small number of areas where our practice differs from the attached MOH document and we have outlined these below for you:

- If your health worker gets sick we will arrange another to support you.
- We won't require you to provide a place for our staff to wash their hands as we provide hand sanitiser for them to use.
- If situations arise where our clinical staff believe you need access to a mask we will provide this for you.

## Taking care of your well being

Your emotional and mental health is important and our Waipuna Hospice Family Support Team continues to be available to you offering social work, counselling, chaplaincy and cultural support- please don't hesitate to be in contact with us If you would like to explore what could be helpful for you.

Civil Defence have set up a 7am-7pm phone line for people experiencing difficulty accessing essential supplies, call 0800 884 222