

Requirements for international aeromedical transfers involving New Zealand and overseas-based medical attendants

02 October 2020

The COVID-19 Public Health Response (Air Border) Order (No 2) 2020, COVID-19 Public Health Response (Isolation and Quarantine) Order 2020, and the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Required Testing) Order 2020 have been amended by the Public Health Response (Air Border, Isolation and Quarantine, and Required Testing) Amendment Order 2020 (the Amendment Order) which came into force at 11.59pm on 4 October 2020.

The Amendment Order introduces new legal requirements for medical attendants to prevent, and limit the risk of, the outbreak or spread of COVID-19.

This document is set out in three parts:

1. A summary of the new legal requirements for medical attendants ordinarily resident in New Zealand
2. A summary of the new legal requirements for overseas-based medical attendants
3. Additional standards to keep medical attendants safe.

Summary of new legal requirements for New Zealand-based medical attendants

Medical attendants who are ordinarily resident in New Zealand must meet **key safety standards** while outside New Zealand. New Zealand-based medical attendants assisting with medical air transfers are exempt from the requirement to undertake 14 days quarantine or isolation on their return to New Zealand.

If a medical officer of health determines (on the basis of information brought to that officer's attention) that there are reasonable grounds to believe that, within 7 days immediately before that arrival and while outside New Zealand, the medical attendant failed to meet one or more of the key safety standards, the medical attendant will be required to isolate and quarantine in accordance with the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Isolation and Quarantine) Order 2020.

The **key safety standards** are that medical attendants must:

- wear personal protective equipment at all times (to the greatest extent practicable) (see pages 5-6) while working in a role involving direct interaction with the passengers or while in any place other than on an aircraft or in their room (or a fellow crew member's room) at the accommodation where the medical attendant is staying
- maintain physical distancing of 2 metres or more from all other persons (to the greatest extent practicable) other than persons on an aircraft on which the attendant is working

- travel as directly as practicable to any accommodation at which they are staying, and
- meet the self-isolation standards at their accommodation until they are required to travel from it to carry out their duties as medical attendants.

The **self-isolation standards** while on layover that must be met are that medical attendants may:

- Only leave their allocated room at any accommodation at which they are staying to:
 - preserve or protect their own or another person's life, health, or safety in an emergency
 - access medical services, or
 - visit a specified room at that accommodation.
- Permit any other person to enter their allocated room only:
 - for medical, emergency, or law enforcement purposes, or
 - if the other person is a fellow crew member.

Fellow crew member means a person who is identified (along with the air crew member, including medical attendant) as being a crew member on the crew manifest for the aircraft on which they both arrived in that country.

Additional legal requirements for New Zealand-based medical attendants who go landside

New Zealand-based medical attendants who go landside are subject to the same requirements as 'higher risk' air crew. A summary of these requirements is provided below.

1. Providing their contact details

Medical attendants are required to notify the Ministry of Health before they leave the airport of:

- the address of the residence or other accommodation that they intend to be their place of self-isolation, and
- an email address and phone number at which they may be contacted.

The method for medical attendants to provide these details will be confirmed shortly.

2. Undergoing a medical examination and test

Medical attendants must report for, and undergo, medical examination and testing for COVID-19 after at least 48 hours have passed since the time and date of their arrival in New Zealand.

The medical examination and testing must involve taking nose swabs or mouth swabs (or both).

3. Self-isolating on return to New Zealand

Medical attendants returning from 'higher risk' layovers must self-isolate. The period of self-isolation commences as soon as practicable after they arrive in New Zealand and ends when they receive a negative result from the medical examination and testing they are required to undergo (see No.2 above). At no point are medical attendants required to self-isolate for longer than 14 days after the time and date of their arrival in New Zealand.

There are legal requirements around how self-isolation is undertaken at their accommodation in New Zealand.

- Medical attendants must self-isolate at the accommodation notified to the Ministry of Health as their place of self-isolation.

- Medical attendants must maintain physical distancing of at least two metres (to the greatest extent practicable) from every person in or outside their place of self-isolation.
- Medical attendants must not permit any other person to enter their accommodation unless that person lives at their accommodation or the person enters for the purposes of preserving or protecting their own or another person's life, health, or safety in an emergency.
- Aircrew must wear personal protective equipment at all times (to the greatest extent practicable) when outside their place of self-isolation.

Medical attendants are permitted to leave their place of self-isolation in certain circumstances. These are:

- to report for, and undergo, medical examination and testing required under the Amendment Order
- if they need to leave to preserve or protect their own or another person's life, health, or safety in an emergency
- to access medical services or obtain necessary medical supplies
- to attend any court, tribunal, New Zealand Parole Board hearing, or other judicial institution that they are required or permitted to attend
- if a medical officer of health is satisfied that the person needs to leave to move to a place of isolation or quarantine (for example, for temporary or emergency care while the person is sick), and
- if they are required to move to a place of isolation or quarantine by a court order or any other obligation imposed by or under an enactment that is related to the detention of the person.

Summary of new legal requirements for overseas-based medical attendants

The following requirements are specific to overseas-based medical attendants who are not ordinarily resident in New Zealand.

Overseas-based medical attendants who go landside in New Zealand are required to enter a managed isolation facility while they are in New Zealand.

Overseas-based medical attendants **are exempt** from the requirement to enter managed isolation if they remain airside at either the international airport they arrive at and any other airport through which they transit.

Overseas-based medical attendants who go landside in New Zealand

The requirements for overseas-based medical attendants are subject to the same requirements as overseas-based air crew (i.e. they are required to enter a MIQF for the duration of their layover unless they remain airside).

Amended requirements for overseas-based medical attendants who travel internationally and layover in New Zealand include:

- medical attendants who do not remain airside are subject to a period of isolation or quarantine from the time when they arrive in New Zealand
- medical attendants will be transferred to a **managed isolation or quarantine facility (MIQF)** to undertake their period of isolation or quarantine
- medical attendants must maintain physical distancing of 2 metres from other people (to the greatest extent possible) while in their period of isolation or quarantine
- medical attendants must wear personal protective equipment as directed by a medical officer of health or a health protection officer while in their period of isolation or quarantine
For aircrew, this means wearing a mask from when they arrive in New Zealand including when they are moving through the airport or on the transport to and from the MIQF. The mask must not be slipped down or removed. They may also be required to wear gloves at certain times
- medical attendants must observe all MIQF requirements while in the MIQF. These will include using the transport provided by the MIQF to go to and from the MIQF
- In most circumstances, medical attendants are not required to undergo testing for COVID-19 unless they wish to leave the MIQF after 14 days and enter the New Zealand community. In this case, medical attendants must meet the low risk indicators, including testing negative for COVID-19, and
- medical attendants are permitted to leave the MIQF if they are returning to the airport to return to their duties as international medical attendants (i.e. departing New Zealand).

Any crew who become unwell during this overnight stay can contact Healthline on 0800 358 5453 for further advice. If an overseas-based medical attendant is infected with COVID-19, they will be managed medically according to their symptoms and clinical status.

Overseas based medical attendants are permitted to leave the managed isolation facility before the 14-day period has elapsed if they are leaving New Zealand as part of their duties as a medical attendant.

Recommended standards for New Zealand-based and overseas-based medical attendants

Xx October 2020

This document summarises the recommended standards for undertaking safe medical transfers to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

COVID-19 status of patient and the medical attendant

The patient being transferred should:

- a. not be a confirmed (or probable) case of COVID-19 (unless fully recovered and released from isolation)
- b. not be under investigation for COVID-19 (not awaiting test results)
- c. not be suspected of having COVID-19 (i.e both the clinical and Higher Index of Suspicion criteria (HIS) see the **case definition** for details)
- d. not be a close contact of a confirmed (or probable) case of COVID-19 within the past 14 days, and
- e. not have travelled internationally in the last 14 days.

The medical attendant should:

- a. not be a confirmed (or probable) case of COVID-19 (unless fully recovered and released from isolation)
- b. not be under investigation for COVID-19 (not awaiting test results)
- c. not be suspected of having COVID-19 (i.e both the clinical and Higher Index of Suspicion criteria (HIS) see the case definition for details)
- d. not be a close contact of a confirmed (or probable) case of COVID-19 within the past 14 days, and
- e. not have travelled internationally in the last 14 days, or have completed/be exempt from quarantine requirements.

Recommended inflight (both outbound and inbound) practices

The medical attendant should wear a surgical mask, replacing the mask with a new one as soon as it is damp. The attendant should practice rigorous hand hygiene following contact with high-touch surfaces or when leaving shared person spaces. The product must contain a minimum of 60% isopropyl alcohol or 70% ethanol and will need to be decanted into 100 mL bottles to be allowed in cabin luggage. They should practice regular and thorough hand hygiene at all times.

Recommended ways to exit the aircraft

The medical attendant should wear a surgical mask, replacing the mask with a new one as soon as it is damp. Gloves must also be worn for medium and high risk layovers. The attendant should practice rigorous hand hygiene following contact with high-touch surfaces or when leaving shared person spaces. The product should contain a minimum of 60% isopropyl alcohol or 70% ethanol, and will need to be decanted into 100 mL bottles to be allowed in cabin luggage.

Recommended practice for a medical handover with overseas and New Zealand health teams

The medical handover should happen within airport grounds, both overseas and in New Zealand. The attendant should wear PPE sufficient for contact and droplet precautions (gloves, gown, surgical mask, and eye protection).

PPE in this situation is to eliminate the scenario where the attendant could be considered close contacts of the local health team. Upon completion of the medical handover, the medical attendant should dispose of all PPE used during the handover, in the correct order and with the hand hygiene protocol. The attendant should then wear a new surgical mask.

On arrival in New Zealand

All arriving medical attendants are required to undertake a health check on arrival. This is the same assessment that all arriving air travellers complete. The aircrew complete a *COVID-19 Crew Health Card* on arrival. This is a record of the health check.

If they go landside, medical attendants should try to move through the airport through a safe corridor to minimise potential contact with others. They should also undertake physical distancing where possible. If any crew develop symptoms of an acute respiratory infection or have had close contact with a COVID-19 case, they should advise health staff immediately.

Medical attendants should consider using dedicated private transport to and from the airport to the layover accommodation.