

# Information for people who receive hospice care in the home

13 JUNE 2020

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance and information for people who receive hospice care in 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
- limit close contact with other people when you go out in public,
- wash your hands regularly or use hand sanitiser
- avoid shared/public transportation
- consider alternative living arrangements if someone is self-isolating in your home, see [self-isolation](#) for further information.

## Changes for palliative care at Alert Level 1

Under Level 1, home and community palliative care can be provided in person. You should expect to receive a pre-visit screening phone call to assess the COVID-19 risk before a visit. The pre-visit screening will also consider who will be in the home during the visit. See the document [Alert Level 1: Risk assessment questions if COVID-19 status is unknown](#) for further information.

If you have been identified as a high-risk patient, providers will take the following steps:

- you will be prioritised for assessment, treatment and care
- where required, you will be rapidly re-assessed, using phones or digital platforms
- you will be checked/monitored through digital/phone platforms
- you will be moved to inpatient facilities, where possible, to deliver community care where clinically appropriate
- providers will follow infection prevention and control (IPC) and personal protective equipment (PPE) guidelines while providing care.

## 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.

## Supporting people at home who have COVID-19

In addition to the prevention measures above, for those that have COVID-19 or who are required to self-isolate we recommend the following:

- notify hospice staff, over the phone, prior to the visit that there is risk of exposure to COVID-19, explain if you or someone in your household is in self-isolation.
- discuss with hospice staff the use of personal protective equipment (PPE). Read more about the use of PPE in health care at [health.govt.nz/ppe-health](https://health.govt.nz/ppe-health)

## Family visitors

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 must also stay away if in self-isolation or if they have been in close contact with someone confirmed with COVID-19 in the last 14 days
- visitors must stay away for 14 days from the date of close contact with the person who has been confirmed with COVID-19.
- if in the last 14 days a visitor has been in contact with someone else who has recently travelled overseas, families should consider the risk and any potential PPE requirements. See the document [Alert Level 1: Risk assessment questions if COVID-19 status is unknown](#) for further information.

## Taking care of your wellbeing

Your emotional and mental health is important. It is normal to feel stressed or lonely during the Covid-19 response, but there are some things you can do to feel better.

- Connect with your usual supports, 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>