

National Contact Tracing Solution (NCTS) Information Sheet

All of us in New Zealand are facing the challenges of COVID-19 together.

The Ministry of Health's elimination strategy is a sustained approach to 'keep it out, find it and stamp it out'. Contact tracing is a key part of this approach, and is designed to limit the transmission of COVID-19.

The National Contact Tracing Solution (the NCTS)

The Ministry of Health has developed a secure national electronic database to support Contact Tracers to keep accurate and secure records of all contact tracing activity.

What are the purposes of the NCTS?

The purpose of the NCTS is to support Contact Tracing to limit the transmission of infectious disease. The NCTS is used to record information collected about persons with, or suspected of having, COVID-19 in order to identify the source of the infection and help prevent its spread. This will enable Contact Tracers to make Close Contacts aware that they too may be infected, thereby encouraging them to seek testing and treatment if necessary.

The NCTS is also to be used to support the effective management of infectious disease by the Ministry of Health, District Health Board Public Health Units, and the Crown Research Institute of Environmental Science Research. Effective management may include national and regional management and planning, audit of contact tracing related services, quality improvement, statistical purposes and research purposes authorised by the Director-General of Health, provided that approval by an ethics committee, if required, has been given for that research and it will not be published in a form that could reasonably be expected to identify any individual.

Who will be able to see the information on the NCTS?

Only authorised users who have been granted access credentials are able to access the NCTS, and these users will all be involved in Contact Tracing and related processes. All access by those authorised users to information on the NCTS is tracked and monitored.

How do Contact Tracers use the NCTS?

Contact Tracers are specially trained, and authorised under the Health Act, to make inquiries of those people who have tested positive for COVID-19, and advise those they may have come in contact with of any risk of infection.

The NCTS assists Contact Tracers by performing the following functions:

- **Test Results:** Recording and allocating the results of COVID-19 tests for management by Contact Tracers. This enables Contact Tracers to make contact to inform individuals in each region if they have a positive result (they are a positive Case). It is also important to address negative test results as part of the follow up, as these individuals may be Close Contracts of someone who is a positive Case.

- **Making Contact:** The NCTS assists to locate individuals by providing access to National Health Index information (the unique identifier assigned to every person who uses health and disability support services in New Zealand). This enables the correct identification of individuals, and links to the National Enrolment Service contact details so contact can be made with those identified individuals. There is also access to the contact details of those who have chosen to submit this information via the NZ COVID Tracer App.
 - For a small number of Cases where a potential Close Contact may not be readily identifiable, information may be requested from other sources to locate contact details. It is important that these individuals are identified and informed of the risk of exposure to COVID-19, so that they and their contacts can be protected
 - These other sources could include open source social media (using accounts that are registered with Ministry of Health identifiers), or other government agencies who may have relevant contact details. This will be managed by the Finding Service, who will follow standard processes designed to protect privacy.
 - No information from these sources is used for purposes other than contact tracing.
- **Recording:** The NCTS enables a single national collection point to record the Case management records for COVID-19 and all relevant Contact Tracing details. The Contact Tracers will work with positive Cases to identify what their activities have been and what locations they have visited in the period when that person may have been infectious. As the NCTS is available to Contact Tracers nationally this enables Cases that have travelled across multiple regions to be appropriately managed and also will enable Contact Tracers from other regions to assist if additional support is required due to high case loads.
 - **Exposure Events:** If Contact Tracers identify any locations where others may have been exposed to COVID-19 (an Exposure Event) this will be recorded on the NCTS. Contact Tracers will then work to identify everyone who may have involved in an Exposure Event. This could include, for example, a flight, a party at a bar, or a church service.
 - **Close Contacts:** If a Close Contact is hard to find the NCTS has a group of trained 'finders' who can make inquiries with other parties to help locate as many of these Close Contacts as possible. The Close Contacts will each then be given the relevant information to help keep themselves and others safe.
 - **Daily Check-in:** Positive Cases and potential Close Contacts may be called daily, or choose to complete a web template, to enable them to be monitored during any period of self-isolation. The details will be recorded on the NCTS.
- **Pathways:** All Cases proceed along NCTS pathways that are clinically designed to make sure all necessary steps are taken, no potential Close Contacts are overlooked, and opportunities for COVID-19 to spread unchecked are minimised.

Is the collection of information voluntary or mandatory?

The initial collection of COVID-19 test results from ESR is mandatory, as a positive Case is the point from which a Contact Tracer will commence their Contact Tracing activities to limit the transmission of COVID-19. Information such as test results, and NHI or NES contact details will be collected onto the NCTS without any direct contact with individuals.

Contact Tracers when making contact with positive Cases or Close Contacts will always seek to work with individuals to obtain information on a voluntary basis. As this information is so important however, if necessary, the Contact Tracers may use the provisions of Part 3 of

Subpart 5 of the Health Act and require individuals and other persons to provide information on a mandatory basis in accordance with the provisions of that Act.

What steps are we taking to protect your privacy?

We take your privacy seriously. We have engaged with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner during development of NCTS processes to ensure your personal information is managed appropriately. We will keep the OPC informed of any significant changes to the NCTS.

Your personal information will be held and managed in accordance with the Privacy Act 1993 and Health Information Privacy Code 1994. Any information collected onto the NCTS will be held securely in compliance with Ministry standards. Measures are in place to protect your information from unauthorised access. In order to deliver the NCTS service we use a secure Salesforce platform based on Amazon Web Services located in Sydney, Australia.

A Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) has been completed for the NCTS. The PIA will be updated to reflect new features and functionality of the NCTS. You can look at the latest version [here](#).

How long will your information be kept for?

Information about the health records of any positive Cases will be retained as required by the Health (Retention of Health Information) Regulations.

Other information held on the NCTS, including identification and physical address(es), will be stored for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic response, and then deleted.

Other information that is not relevant for Contact Tracing purposes will either not be recorded in NCTS or be regularly deleted (for example, the details returned in the Daily Check-in will be deleted within six months – only the record of completion of the Daily Check-in will be retained).

How can you view or change any information about you?

To view any personal information held by us about you, or if you have any concerns or questions about the personal information that we hold and wish to request a correction, please write to:

The Privacy Officer
Ministry of Health
PO Box 5013
Wellington

Email: information@health.govt.nz

We may require proof of your identity before being able to provide you with any personal information.

Who can I contact if I have a privacy concern?

If you're not satisfied with our response to any privacy-related concern you may have, you can contact the Privacy Commissioner:

Office of the Privacy Commissioner
PO Box 10-094
Wellington
New Zealand

Phone: 04 474 7590

Email: enquiries@privacy.org.nz