

Questions and answers about air crew

26 June 2020

Do air crew living in New Zealand need to self-isolate following international travel?

Air crew living in New Zealand and returning from high-risk layovers are required to self-isolate, have a COVID-19 test on day 2 after their arrival in New Zealand and continue to-self-isolate until the results of that test have been returned. Air crew returning from medium-risk and low-risk layovers are not required to isolate or have a test.

Air crew are also required to follow other strict protocols both inflight and during their overseas layovers to protect themselves against COVID-19. In addition, on arrival to New Zealand, international aircrew undertake a health declaration and health screen; and use a safe corridor to move-through the airport.

What are some of the protocols?

During the flight, international air crew are required to wear face masks and gloves in their interactions with passengers. They are also required to practice regular hand hygiene.

All air crew staying overnight in another country or territory are transported through the airport and to their accommodation by private vehicle wearing a mask, and they are not allowed to leave their room at all until they are transported back to the airport. They also required to wear masks during any interactions with passengers and follow strict hand hygiene when on the aircraft.

On arrival to New Zealand, international aircrew undertake a health declaration and health screen; and use a safe corridor to move-through the airport. Air crew living in New Zealand and returning from high-risk layovers are required to self-isolate, have a COVID-19 test on day 2 after their arrival in New Zealand and continue to-self-isolate until the results of that test have been returned.

What is a high-risk layover?

There are three risk levels:

1. Low-risk layovers – these are layovers where there is no overnight stay or where the crew stays airside (the security part of the airport with limited access) in a managed facility. Layovers to Australia and the Pacific are low risk as the crew do not stay overnight and stay airside throughout.
2. Medium-risk layovers – these are layovers where air crew are staying landside (the public parts of the airport or in the general community) for two nights or less and there is tightly managed transport to the accommodation and crew. Shanghai is an example of a medium-risk layover as the crew has to stay two nights or less in a dedicated landside hotel.
3. High-risk layovers – these are layovers where air crew are staying landside for three nights or more, or two nights or less where the transport / accommodation are less tightly controlled.

Why don't air crew have to wear PPE and masks when in the community?

Because air crew must follow strict protocols both in flight and while they are overseas, their risk of being exposed to COVID-19 is very low. As a result, once they return to New Zealand they don't need to take any additional measures - this includes not having to wear masks or PPE. The exception is for air crew who have had a high risk layover and who are required to self-isolate for 2 days – once these air crew have received their COVID-19 test result (and it is negative), they also don't have to wear masks in the community,

Is it safe to have aircrew in my business?

Yes, they are as safe as anybody else who comes into your business. It is important that business owners continue to implement the controls required of them for the Alert level in place at the time.

My children go to school with children of air crew are they safe?

Yes. There are measures in place to manage the risks of air crew being exposed to COVID-19.

Are inbound non-New Zealand-based flight crews that need to stay overnight in New Zealand required to self-isolate while here?

Yes, inbound crew are required to self-isolate in accommodation that has been approved by their airline. The accommodation is expected to meet or exceed the criteria for accommodation in a managed facility. The crew are expected to travel directly to the hotel from the airport and remain in their room using the hotel room service until they travel back to the airport for their next flight.

Requirements for any hotel accommodation being used by international air crew for overnight layovers

The requirements for any hotel accommodation being used by international air crew for overnight layovers are as follows.

- That the hotel has the ability to check in numerous guests at once with a dedicated queue allowing for physically distancing of 2 metres.
- That the hotel provides in-room meals including breakfast, lunch and dinner.
- That the hotel can meet individual dietary requirements.
- The hotel has an outdoor space where aircrew can exercise or smoke and remain physically distant from other aircrew and guests. To assist with the challenges of isolation, for hotel stays greater than 24 hours, aircrew can meet in a controlled area in the hotel, preferably with fresh air, in groups of up to eight people for 1 hour in each 24-hour period. During this meeting time all crew must follow the hand hygiene advice, wear a mask, and maintain a 2 metre distance unless they are already close contacts on the aircraft, in which case a 1m apart is fine.
- That the hotel must have enough staff available to meet the extra requirements for cleaning, catering, and delivery of meals.
- That the hotel can provide a service to purchase essential items (as aircrew are not allowed to go to supermarkets).
- That the hotel can provide a laundry service for aircrew, as well as laundering of linen and towels.
- That the hotel can provide sufficient connectivity such as wifi.
- The hotel must be reasonably close to a pharmacy or good access for collecting medication on behalf of the aircrew.
- That the hotel is within an hour of a medical facility.