

January-February/Hānuere-Pēpuere 2021

Public Health Bulletin

COVID-19 Update

Tēnā koutou/Thank you all for your continued commitment to keep COVID-19 out of our communities. A few updates follow:

Waikato COVID-19 response update

Three new cases of COVID-19 were reported in the community (Auckland) on February 14 with an additional three (known contacts) announced yesterday. Source investigation is ongoing however one of the cases has a connection to the border. The virus is the UK variant B.1.1.7 which is more infectious than the original variant.

46 locations of interest have been identified across Auckland, Waikato and New Plymouth with a Piopio GAS station and Otorohanga McDonalds being significant in our rohe. A list of all locations of interest can be found [here](#).

Testing guidance

Current Ministry of Health guidelines ask that anyone who visited a location of interest on the days and times listed stay home and call Healthline (08003585453) for further advice ([locations of interest](#)). Action will depend on whether you are considered a Close/Casual or Casual Plus contact.

In line with previous guidance anyone who has COVID-19 like symptoms should get tested and stay home while unwell and while their test result is pending. Any symptomatic person who also meets HIS criteria should be swabbed and notified to the Medical Officer of Health. They should be advised to self-isolate while their test result is pending and to stay home while unwell.

We currently have a COVID-19 testing station available at Founders Theatre. Over the last few days additional testing centres have been operating at Claudelands Events Centre, Otorohanga Sports Club and in Piopio alongside a large number of designated GP practices. Demand for testing has been high and we thank everyone who has worked so hard to deploy services quickly. Locations and hours for testing sites may change due to demand. Please keep up to date with these on the DHB [website](#).

Global situation

There has been over 100 million COVID-19 cases globally and greater than 2 million deaths to date. Vaccination is occurring with 72% of Israel having been vaccinated, 22% in the UK and 2.2% globally. Daily case numbers have been decreasing over the

last month however hundreds of thousands of cases and tens of thousands of deaths continue to be reported daily (Johns Hopkins University).

Vaccine approval

Medsafe have given provisional approval for the use of the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine in New Zealand for people aged 16 years and over. Border and managed isolation and quarantine (MIQ) workers are currently set to be vaccinated first with the immunisation programme set to begin February 20 in Auckland (see [here](#)). Health care and essential workers and those most at risk will follow in the second quarter of the year. For more information on this vaccine and the status of other COVID-19 vaccines being considered in New Zealand see [medsafe.govt.nz](#).

Nau mai, haere mai /Welcome- Ishani, Gurpreet and Ashleigh

The PHU is excited to welcome Ishani, Gurpreet and Ashleigh to our Public Health whānau. Dr Ishani Soysa has joined the PHU advisory and development (PHAD) team. Ishani has come to us from Massey University having completed her PHD in statistics and will be supporting the team in data analysis and research.

We also welcome Gurpreet Bain and Ashleigh Mail to our Health Protection team. Gurpreet has come to us from Taranaki DHB – Public Health Unit and will be supporting the team as a Health Protection Officer. Ashleigh has come to us with a strong desire and passion for Environmental Health having recently completed her Bachelor of Health Science at Massey University. Ashleigh will be supporting us as a Health Protection Advisor, working on the alcohol and tobacco portfolios.



Smokefree update

Have your say on vaping legislation

Amendments were made to the Smokefree Environments Act in November 2020 which means that vaping products will now be regulated alongside tobacco products and herbal smoking products under the Act.

The amendments extend current prohibitions on smoking to include vaping. They require indoor workplaces, school buildings and grounds to be smokefree **and** vape-free, prohibit the sale of vaping products to those under the age of 18 years, prohibit vaping in cars carrying children under the age of 18 years, enable product safety requirements to be set in regulations and limit vape advertising, promotion and the sponsorship of events by anyone who manufactures or sells vapes. The changes will be phased in over a period of 15 months. These amendments reflect the most significant changes to this piece of legislation since it was first established in 1990.

The Ministry of Health is currently seeking input into the proposed regulations that will support operationalisation of the Act. Consultation is being sought on a range of issues including packaging, vaping retailers, product notification and safety, and available information and advice. You have until March 15 to have your say. Check out: <https://consult.health.govt.nz/tobacco-control/vaping-regulations-consultation/>

Once and For All

The Once and For All Smoking Cessation service is available throughout the Waikato region. Options for one-on-one, kanohi ki te kanohi/face to face and rōpū/group support are available to those who are wanting to quit smoking. Specific help is also available for hapū māmā. Research shows that people who engage with behavioural support + Nicotine Replacement Therapy through cessation services are more than four times as likely to stay smokefree than those going it alone. Further information about the service, who is eligible and how to make a referral can be found on the Once and For All [website](#).

Updated resources to support you in delivering the smokefree message within your community and further information on vaping as a tool for becoming smokefree are available [here](#) (smokefree.org.nz).

Lead detected in Otago drinking water

You may have seen media coverage of the detections of lead in two water supplies in Otago. Public Health South is leading an incident response to these detections. Public Health South have advised that Blood Lead Level (BLL) testing is currently funded for

- those who have lived or worked for at least one month in Waikouaiti, Karitane or Hawkesbury over the past 12 months

- for pregnant women and formula fed babies who have spent at least two weeks in these towns over the past 12 months.

People have been advised to see their GP to arrange a test.

Public Health South ask that an email address is also collected for affected individuals and provided to Public Health South so that a questionnaire can be forwarded for completion. Alternatively, people can contact Public Health South directly.

The media release can be found [here](#)

Contact details for Public Health South

Phone: 03 4769800

Email: publichealth@southerndhb.govt.nz

Cyanobacteria updates

Many kiwis enjoy swimming or walking their dogs at our local roto/lakes to cool off during the hot summer months.

Unfortunately, our local Lakes' Kainui, Whangape and Waikare have health warnings in place due to elevated levels of cyanobacteria (blue green algae). At elevated levels, cyanotoxins are harmful to the health of humans and animals. Cyanotoxin poisoning can present with a range of symptoms including skin rash; eye irritation; rhinitis; sore throat; bronchospasm; cough; headache; nausea; vomiting; diarrhoea. These symptoms may not appear for some time after contact with affected water. Long-term exposure to cyanobacterial toxins may cause additional health risks.

While health warnings are in place it is advised that these lakes not be used for any activity where skin contact with or potential ingestion of the water could occur. If contact does occur, skin should be rinsed clean and clothing changed as soon as possible.

There is no test available to confirm cyanotoxin poisoning and diagnosis is based on clinical symptoms combined with a history of exposure following exclusion of other causes. BPAC have released a helpful article on cyanotoxin poisoning specifically written for primary care. You can access it [here](#).

A reminder that any case of suspected cyanotoxin poisoning should be notified to the Medical Officer of Health. This can be done using the Hazardous Substances Disease and Injury Reporting Tool (HSDIRT) or by contacting the Public Health Unit directly on (07) 838 2569. Keep up to date with recreational water quality at lawa.org.nz or keep an eye on our public health alerts at <https://www.waikatodhbnewsroom.co.nz/health-alerts/>

**Notifiable diseases –
January 2021 compared to January 2020 (Waikato DHB)**

Disease name	Waikato ¹				YTD		
	2020	2021	Change	2020-2021	Waikato	National	% ²
Campylobacteriosis	71	71	0	-	71	680	10
COVID-19	0	4	4	▲	4	139	3
Cryptosporidiosis	2	4	2	▲	4	36	11
Dengue fever	1	0	-1	▼	0	0	-
Gastroenteritis - unknown cause	0	2	2	▲	2	24	8
Gastroenteritis / foodborne intoxication	3	1	-2	▼	1	7	14
Giardiasis	20	8	-12	▼	8	82	10
Invasive pneumococcal disease	6	5	-1	▼	5	22	23
Lead Poisoning	0	2	2	▲	2	9	22
Legionellosis	2	0	-2	▼	0	23	0
Leptospirosis	3	0	-3	▼	0	4	0
Listeriosis	1	0	-1	▼	0	4	0
Mumps	2	0	-2	▼	0	1	0
Pertussis	1	2	1	▲	2	6	33
Rheumatic fever - initial attack	3	1	-2	▼	1	9	11
Salmonellosis	7	13	6	▲	13	87	15
Shigellosis	3	0	-3	▼	0	2	0
Tuberculosis disease - new case	1	3	2	▲	3	33	9
VTEC/STEC infection	7	6	-1	▼	6	78	8
Yersiniosis	9	6	-3	▼	6	103	6

¹Number of cases. Source Waikato DHB.

²Waikato Year to Date (YTD) count as a proportion of national data.

Note: Four cases of COVID-19, all historical cases identified at the border in Managed Isolation Facilities

Medical Officers of Health: Felicity Dumble – Richard Wall – Richard Vipond – Richard Hoskins – Geoff Cramp

After hours:

MOoH: 021 359 650

HPO: 021 999 521

If there is no answer, please contact Waikato Hospital's switchboard 07 839 8899 and ask for the on-call MOoH.

During office hours:

Population Health (MOoH or HPO): (07) 838 2569

Notifications: 07 838 2569 ext. 22065 or 22020

Notifications outside Hamilton: 0800 800 977

Fax: 07 838 2382

Email: notifiablediseases@waikatodhb.health.nz

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