

COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) – staying at home (self-isolation)

If you have returned from any country except those in Category 2, you will be required to stay at home (self-isolate) for 14 days. This page offers guidance on what that means.

This page was last updated 15 March 2020.

Recent arrivals

If you have been in any country except those listed in [Category 2](#) in the last 14 days:

- Stay at home (self-isolate) for 14 days from the date of departure or close contact
- Contact Healthline for free on [0800 358 5453](#), or your GP if you begin to feel unwell. The symptoms of COVID-19 are cough, fever, and shortness of breath.

If you arrive in New Zealand before 23:59 pm on Sunday 15 March from any country (except Italy or South Korea) you do not need to self-isolate. If you arrive after 1:00 am on Monday 16 March from any country except those listed on the [countries and areas of concern under Category 2](#) you will need to self-isolate for 14 days.

What does staying at home mean?

Staying home is a precautionary measure to protect those around you – your family, friends, colleagues - from possibly contracting COVID-19. Self-isolation is an effective measure of prevention. We are asking people to take simple, common-sense steps to avoid close contact with other people as much as possible, like you would with the seasonal flu virus. We know it may be a stressful time, but taking these measures will help protect you, your family, and all of New Zealand from COVID-19 and other common infectious diseases.

As much as possible, you should limit your contact with people other than the family members/companions you travelled with. You should avoid having visitors to your home, but it is okay for friends, family or delivery drivers to drop off food and supplies.

If you are in a home where the others who live with you haven't travelled you should minimise close contact with them by avoiding situations where you have face-to-face contact closer than 2 metres for more than 15 minutes. The other household residents do not need to self-isolate provided these precautions are followed.

You should not share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, pillows or other items with other people in your home. After using these items, you should wash them thoroughly with soap and water, place them in the dishwasher for cleaning or wash them in your washing machine.

Contact Healthline for free on [0800 358 5453](#) if you begin to feel unwell. The symptoms of COVID-19 are cough, fever, and shortness of breath.

For all non-health related questions, call [0800 Government \(0800 779 997\)](tel:0800779997).

There is more information on all of these aspects on this page.

Things you can do to make it easier

Staying at home may present its own challenges, but there are things you can do to make the 14 days easier.

- before you return to New Zealand, you need to plan ahead and think about what you need to be able to stay at home for the full 14 days
- talk to your employer, friends and family to ask for their help to access the things you will need in advance
- talk to your employer to see if you can work from home during this time
- think about and plan how you can get access to food and other supplies such as medications
- if you need supplies while you are staying at home, ask friends or family to drop off anything you need or you can order supplies online. Make sure any deliveries are left outside your home for you to collect. Many New Zealand companies are now offering a 'contactless' delivery option, where they notify you when they have delivered your order but remain nearby to ensure you receive it
- you can keep in touch with friends and family over the phone, through or other means of contact
- physical exercise is good for your wellbeing. Look for online classes or courses to help you take light exercise in your home
- you can go outside, but you need to limit your contact with others
- don't use public transport, taxis or similar transport methods during your 14 day period. You can only use public transport after you arrive in New Zealand for the sole purpose of returning to your home, but cannot use it after that. You can use your own transport means (car, bike etc) whenever you wish
- you can live with others during your 14 days, but you need to avoid close contact with them. This also means don't share beds, linen or food
- aim to stay in a well-ventilated room with a window that can be opened. Try to keep the window open as much as possible to enable ventilation and airflow as this will help to keep clean air moving through your room

Wash your hands often

Cleaning your hands frequently throughout the day by washing with soap and water for 20 seconds or using hand sanitiser will help protect you and the people you live with. This step is one of the most effective ways of reducing the risk of infection to you and to other people. If you live with others, they should also wash their hands regularly as a precaution.

Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

Cover your coughs and sneezes

Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or you can cough or sneeze into your elbow. Throw used tissues in a lined trash can, and immediately wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds making sure you dry them thoroughly. You can also use hand sanitiser.

If you have a carer, they should use disposable tissues to wipe away any mucus or phlegm after you have sneezed or coughed. The cleaner should then clean their hands.

Facemasks

Facemasks are not recommended as an effective means of preventing the spread of infection. They play an important role in clinical settings, such as hospitals, but there's very little evidence of benefit from their use outside of these settings.

While you stay home, try to separate yourself from the people you live with

As much as possible, you should limit your contact with people other than the family members/companions you travelled with. You should avoid having visitors to your home, but it is okay for friends, family or delivery drivers to drop off food.

If you are in a home where the others who live with you haven't travelled you should minimise close contact with them by avoiding situations where you have face-to-face contact closer than 2 metres for more than 15 minutes. The other household residents do not need to self-isolate provided these precautions are followed.

Use your own toothbrushes, eating and drinking utensils (including cups and glasses in the bathroom and bedroom), dishes, towels, washcloths or bed linen. Do not share food and drinks. Someone in your home can prepare your food, but you should not prepare food for others. Wash your clothing and dishes separate to others in your home.

If you have a garden, it is fine to do gardening as you aren't in close contact with other members of your household.

Use of shared spaces if you live with others

You should not be sharing a bed with others. You may need to speak with your family about sleeping arrangements. You should avoid sleeping in a common area during the 14 day period.

Minimise the time you spend in shared spaces such as bathrooms, kitchens and sitting rooms as much as possible and keep shared spaces well ventilated. Clean surfaces after you use them and try to avoid touching them after you have cleaned them. This means areas like kitchen benches and sinktops.

Make sure you use separate towels from other people in your house, both for drying yourself after bathing or showering and for hand-hygiene purposes. Ask your family or the people you live with to remember to use their own towels.

If you use a shared toilet and bathroom, it's important that you clean them after you have used them every time (for example, wiping surfaces you have come into contact with). You may wish to be the last to use the shower/bath in the morning or evening to make this easier on those you live with. You should use your own toilet paper, handtowels, toothpaste and other supplies during your stay at home.

If you share a kitchen with others, avoid using it while others are present. Take your meals back to your room to eat. It may be easier for someone else in your household to prepare your food and you avoid the kitchen area. If you have one, use a dishwasher to clean and dry your used crockery and cutlery. If this is not possible, wash them using your usual washing up liquid and warm water and dry them thoroughly, remembering to use a separate tea towel.

We understand that it will be difficult for some people to separate themselves from others at home. You should do your very best to follow this guidance and everyone in your household should regularly wash their hands, avoid touching their face and clean frequently touched surfaces.

Don't have visitors in your home

Don't invite or allow social visitors, such as friends and family, to enter your home. If you want to speak to someone who is not a member of your household, use the phone or other means of contact.

Laundry

Do not shake dirty laundry; this minimises the possibility of dispersing virus through the air. It may be easier for someone else to fold and put away common laundry items (such as towels and tea towels) and provide a supply for you. You should fold and put away your own laundry items.

Wash items as appropriate in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. Dirty laundry that has been in contact with an ill person can be washed with other people's items.

If you do not have a washing machine, wait a further 72 hours after your 14-day isolation period has ended before taking your laundry to a laundrette. Don't ask others to do your laundry.

If you live with children

If your children didn't travel overseas with you, they can continue to attend school and other normal activities. You should reduce your close contact with them, however that may not be possible with children, particularly young children.

Try to explain to your children what is happening in a way that is easy to understand. Tell them you are staying at home to protect other people. Try to avoid worrying children. Remind them you are not sick, and it's unlikely you will become sick, but you are being very safe to protect them and other New Zealanders.

What we have seen so far is that children with COVID-19 appear to be less severely affected. It is nevertheless important to do your best to follow this guidance.

If a child develops symptoms, you should contact Healthline. They will also need to stay at home for 14 days from the onset of their symptoms.

If you are breastfeeding while staying at home

There is currently no clinical evidence to suggest that the virus can be transmitted through breast milk. Infection can be spread to the baby in the same way as to anyone in close contact with you. The benefits of breastfeeding outweigh any potential risks of transmission of the virus through breast milk or by being in close contact with your child, however, this will be an individual decision and can be discussed with your midwife, health visitor or GP by telephone.

If you wish to breastfeed, take precautions to limit the potential spread of COVID-19 to the baby by:

- washing your hands before touching the baby, breast pump or bottles
- avoiding coughing or sneezing on the baby while feeding at the breast
- cleaning any breast pump as recommended by the manufacturer after each use
- considering asking someone who is well to feed your expressed breast milk to the baby

If you are feeding with formula or expressed milk, sterilise the equipment carefully before each use. You should not share bottles or a breast pump with someone else.

If you live with an older or vulnerable person

You might live with or provide care to an elderly or vulnerable person (person who is immune compromised or with comorbidities eg cardiovascular disease, diabetes or hypertension).

If the person didn't travel overseas with you, they can continue their normal activities. You should reduce your close contact with them, however we understand that may be difficult for you.

If the person develops symptoms, you should contact Healthline on [0800 358 5453](tel:08003585453).

Advice for using alternative accommodation (rental homes, hotels, motels, Air BnB, hired vehicles, taxis)

If you need to stay at home for 14 days and are considering using alternative accommodation, you must advise them in advance of your need to self-isolate. The majority of people who will need to stay at home will be healthy, but suppliers may make their own decisions about whether to allow you to use their provisions, in compliance with regulations regarding their industry such as [the Residential Tenancies Act 1986](#).

If you supply a service which has been contacted by someone required to stay at home, you should consider the implications. The majority of people who will need to stay at home after returning from overseas will be healthy, and if the process is adhered to, there should be no risk to those who use your services in the future. You can use cleaning services to further reduce risk to future users.

Transport

When you arrive in New Zealand, you may need to travel from the airport where you arrive to another part of New Zealand to get home, for example, by plane, train or bus. You do not have to self-isolate where you arrive in New Zealand, you can continue on to the destination where you self-isolate, for example arriving at Auckland International Airport but living in New Plymouth, you can fly from Auckland to New Plymouth. Where possible while travelling, sit in a window seat in a row by yourself. If you are unwell you should seek advice from Healthline before you travel onwards.

While travelling make sure you use hand sanitiser regularly. If you need to cough or sneeze, cover your mouth or nose, or you can cough and sneeze into your sleeve.

You can only use public transport after you arrive in New Zealand for the sole purpose of returning to your home.

You can't use public transport, taxis or similar transport methods during your 14 day period aside from the above.

You can use your own transport means (car, bike etc) whenever you wish.

Getting food and medicine

Where possible, contact a friend, family member or delivery services to carry out errands like supermarket shopping on your behalf.

Taking care of your mental health and wellbeing. Your emotional and mental health is important. It is normal to feel stressed or lonely when self-isolating, but there are some things you can do to feel better. [Information on managing your mental wellbeing](#).

Reach out to your usual supports, like family and friends, and talk about how you feel. We also 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 a health professional. For support with grief, anxiety, distress or mental wellbeing, you can call or text [1737](tel:1737) – free, anytime, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week – to talk with a trained counsellor.

If you become unwell, contact Healthline

Contact Healthline for free on [0800 358 5453](tel:08003585453), or your GP if you begin to feel unwell. The symptoms of COVID-19 are cough, fever, and shortness of breath.

For all non-health related questions, call [0800 Government \(0800 779 997\)](tel:0800779997).