

Q&A – responses to questions from the Preparing for Omicron zoom chat (accurate as of 27/1/22)

NB: We are still awaiting the answers to some questions around support for those isolating in the community – we will forward these when they become available. As noted, this is a fast developing situation so some issues will become clearer ie RATS distribution.

Vaccinations

- We have a number of whānau who still don't want to be vaccinated and we are still figuring out how we can support them as we are a home visiting service and not put them at risk, or our staff as well. Do you have any guidance with regarding this?

Response: Masks, ventilation, and physical distancing will offer some protection to both staff and client. These become even more important when the client does not have the protection of the vaccine. Higher specification (N95) masks may be appropriate. Depending on the type of service provided, some interactions may be able to happen outdoors.

The workshop offers some useful tips for maintaining relationships with those who are reluctant to be vaccinated -<https://www.theworkshop.org.nz/publications/how-to-talk-about-covid-19-vaccinations-building-trust-in-vaccination-a-guide-2021>

RATS/Testing

- Regarding the Rapid Antigen Testing, we understand RATS are being front-loaded to Maori and Pasifika providers - is there a timeframe around this? - ie when do we expect them to be distributed?
- And what is the accuracy of Rapid Antigen testing?
- When will the RATS be added to the PPE website for ordering?

Response: RATS (rapid antigen tests) play an important role when there is widespread community transmission. Before that stage, due to their limited effectiveness (ie rate of false positives,) they are less useful than the existing PCR (polymerase chain reaction) tests. Once there is a large number of community cases, we understand that RATS will be more widely available, with a commitment to distribute them using an equity lens. Māori and Pasifika providers have established good processes for supporting communities to access PCR tests. At this stage, these tests remains the best option. We currently have no information about the date or process for ensuring access to RATS but we expect more government announcements soon.

While this article is from the US, it provides good basic information about the pros and cons of the two types of test - <https://theconversation.com/whats-the-difference-between-a-pcr-and-antigen-covid-19-test-a-molecular-biologist-explains-170917>

Public Health Powers regionally

- Can a DHB insist on a localised lockdown if there are a lot of cases in one area?

Response: Under the Health Act, the Medical Officer of Health holds some powers to manage disease outbreaks. These powers have been amended several times over the past 2 years. The COVID-19 pandemic has been managed nationally, with some regional and local lockdowns. The current policy for Omicron is to manage the outbreaks through national traffic light settings. It is unlikely that any localised lockdown would be imposed through a local public health order.

Masks

- Where can we access training in the correct use of N95 masks for Community Support Workers?
- What type of disposable masks are the health professionals using? Are they N95 specifically? Also is there any advice on reuse of disposable masks?
- Are CPH offering opportunity for mask fitting opportunities for health stakeholders?

Response: The attached powerpoint, and links below have all you need to know about masks:

A simple knot and tuck could make your surgical mask far more effective against Omicron - an Auckland GP shows you how

<https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/health/coronavirus/127581228/covid19-gp-shows-how-to-fit-your-n95-and-surgical-mask-at-home?cid=app-iPhone>

As per attached slides and video with GP above, fit checking (the seal) of the N95 mask is more than enough for the very high level of protection in high risk settings

Here are some CDHB resources about N95. In non-clinical settings, full PPE is not required.

[A video on PPE including N95 use](#)

[a powerpoint on how to wear an N95 mask](#)

Here is information from the Ministry of Health

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/covid-19-use-masks-and-face-coverings-community#exemption>