



DIETITIANS BOARD

Te Mana Mātanga Mātai Kai

COVID-19

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHAT DO I NEED TO DO WHEN PREPARING TO CHANGE LEVELS?

Dietitians need to follow the Government's Alert Level objectives and MOH guidance, and be prepared for changing Alert Levels (up and down) over the next year.

Questions to consider:

- Are you able to follow the current Ministry of Health COVID-19 public health and social measures?
- Are you set up to work with at least 2m of physical distancing?
- Are you set up to provide telehealth services?
- Do you or will you need PPE for face-to-face consultations?
- Have you recorded details of all contacts (personal contacts, colleagues, patients/clients, employees, etc.) to ensure effective contact tracing if required?

WHAT STEPS SHOULD I TAKE TO ASSESS PATIENTS/CLIENTS

1. **Triage all patients/clients by telehealth means first** and decide whether they can be managed via telehealth or need to be deferred. Refer to the [Decision Tree](#).
2. If the patient/client needs an in-person consultation, ask the following questions before the appointment:
 - Do you have a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19?
 - Have you, or anyone coming in contact with you, had contact with someone with a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19?
 - Have you travelled internationally in the last 14 days?
 - Are you aged 70 or over?
 - Do have any of the following symptoms?
 - sore throat
 - cough
 - shortness of breath
 - high temperature (>38C)
 - loss of sense of smell
 - head cold- e.g. runny nose, sneezing, post-nasal drip

HOW DO I LIMIT TRANSMISSION?

The Ministry of Health requires that appropriate measures are in place to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission between yourself, your patients/clients, their whānau and the public. This includes the recommended physical distancing, hand washing and sanitising using alcohol-based products.

Practitioners must:

- provide virtual appointments and use telehealth when possible
- use the *Decision Tree* (Figure 1) to determine whether a face-to-face meeting with a patient/client is required during Alert Levels 3 and 4 screen patients/clients for respiratory symptoms, and notify the public health unit if there is a suspected case of COVID-19
- limit points of entry to workplace facilities
- allow only the patient/client to be present in the building with the practitioner; a carer or guardian may be allowed to accompany the patient/client in appropriate circumstances
- allow only one patient/client at any time
- encourage staff/patient/client hand hygiene (e.g. provide hand sanitiser)
- encourage staff/patient/client respiratory hygiene using alternatives to facemasks (e.g. provide tissues to cover cough)
- maintain 2 metres separation unless closer contact is required by the emergency or the acute presentation
- follow all Ministry of Health [PPE protocols](#) if you are required to engage in contact closer than 2 metres
- follow all hand hygiene practices
- follow all appropriate sanitisation requirements in between patients/clients in the rare event of successive patient/client appointments during Alert Levels 3 and 4

Waiting areas

- Remove all unnecessary items from the waiting room (including communal reading materials)
- Request patients/clients to wash their hands (where facilities allow) or 'hand sanitise' on arrival and departure from the clinic and after coughing/sneezing/blowing their nose/using toilet facilities
- Provide tissues and waste bins
- Clear and clean surfaces and high-touch surfaces (door handles, taps/toilets, hand sanitiser plungers, chair arms, reception counter, clipboards, pens, keyboards, telephones, etc.) regularly with a neutral pH detergent
- Clean and disinfect areas of known contamination

Personal protective equipment

- Select appropriate PPE as per the up-to-date [Ministry of Health PPE guidelines](#)
- Ensure you receive training on and understand:
 - when to use PPE
 - what PPE is necessary
 - how to properly don, use, and dispose of PPE to prevent self-contamination
 - how to properly dispose of, or disinfect and maintain PPE.
- Any reusable PPE must be properly cleaned, decontaminated, and maintained after and between uses.

Room cleaning and decontamination

After a face-to-face consultation, the room should be cleaned and disinfected, including a wipe down of all hard surfaces with detergent and water, and then use of a hospital grade disinfectant.

Appropriate PPE should be worn during cleaning. PPE and waste generated should be disposed in a closed clinical waste bin.

WHAT WILL FUTURE PRACTICE LOOK LIKE?

The way dietitians practise, who they see and how they see patients/clients, will ultimately be different going forward and practitioners will need to adapt and change.

Dietitians are asked to continue:

- following New Zealand Government and Ministry of Health information and advice,
- working collaboratively with DHBs, PHOs, public health units and employers,
- managing the continuum of dietetic care between healthcare providers,
- staying in contact with the Dietitians Board and Dietitians New Zealand, and
- ensuring that sales and commercial gain do not influence their decision making and clinical judgement.

As the Dietitians Board receives more information from the Ministry of Health, we will provide more clarity and guidance. We appreciate your patience as we move through this challenging time.

WHERE CAN I FIND RESOURCES?

[COVID Alert System](#)

[COVID Updates](#)

[Ministry of Health COVID19 website](#)

[COVID-19 factsheets and guidance for health professionals](#)

[Advice for all health professionals](#)

[Information for essential workers in health and non-health workplaces on keeping safe at work and at home, and using personal protective equipment \(PPE\) at work](#)

[Guidance on the use of personal protective equipment \(PPE\) in health care](#)