

1pm Press Conference  
Saturday 21 August

Good afternoon

I want to start today with some good news.

Yesterday we hit two records, the most vaccinations administered in New Zealand in a single day – 56,843.

So far 72 percent of New Zealander aged 40+ are either booked or have been vaccinated with at least one dose. This is great progress.

Over 150,000 vaccination bookings were made yesterday too, which is fantastic.

Just a reminder, if you are 40+ or in one of our other priority groups and haven't made your booking yet, visit [BookMyVaccine.nz](https://BookMyVaccine.nz) today and reserve your spot.

And yesterday we saw most COVID tests processed in a single day – 41,464 (note get numbers on swabs taken)

The fact we achieved both those results on the same day is extraordinary. And is exactly what we need to do to both get on top of this outbreak, but also to prepare us for the future.

But despite reaching record numbers, we do need to keep going.

We need to test test test to ensure we can get an accurate picture of the perimeter of the virus and we can also be using this time to increase our vaccination rates.

I want to acknowledge everyone who has waited for hours to get a test. You are playing a key role in controlling this outbreak, and helping us get back to normal faster.

In order to assist with this we have stood up additional testing capacity. Today there are 14 Community Testing Centres open across Auckland including four new Pop-Ups which have been stood up overnight, of which Warkworth opened at 11am and Takanini will be opening at 1pm today

In addition, four community testing centres for close contacts only are in operation today. These are sites that are only for those we know are contacts to help ensure we prioritise their testing. These are not sites that we are publicly advertising, but those who need to use them are being given the details.

And in Wellington - 6 community testing stations are open across the region and this includes three Pop-Ups, which were stood up overnight.

Go to [helathpoint.co.nz](https://helathpoint.co.nz) to get details of COVID testing sites anywhere in the country. Or call ahead to your GP to see if they have testing available.

Just a reminder of who it is that we are focused on testing right now. These people are:

1. Contacts of known cases. If you are called by public health then you need to isolate and get a test.
2. People who were at locations of interest on the dates and times recorded – you too need to isolate and get a test. If you went to a location of interest, but not on the date or time set out you don't need to be tested
3. And finally those with cold and flu symptoms. Please isolate and get tested.

If you are not in one of these groups and if you are well, you don't need a test. It is great to have very high numbers of test across the country. It helps to give us certainty, but at the moment we most need to ensure that those who may have been exposed to the virus are getting tested and getting these result through.

Sitting behind all this testing and vaccinations is an outstanding health workforce.

This outbreak has particularly impacted on our frontline health workers, even more so than in that past. On behalf of New Zealand I want to acknowledge how tough the last few days have been. And also to say thank you.

If you interact with a health worker in the coming days, at a vaccine station or at a testing station, please pass on the thanks of the team of 5 million.

I'll now pass over to Dr McElnay to provide an update on case numbers and our source investigation.

As you can see our number of cases has grown again.

Given the very large number of locations of interest and what we know about the transmissibility of Delta that isn't surprising. We always said cases will rise before they fall, and based on the experience of overseas countries, we do expect cases to continue to rise through to next week before they start coming away.

But there are actions you can take to make sure we don't create new cases or spread the virus in lockdown.

One of the things we have learnt from New South Wales is that the virus can keep spreading during lockdown from people going to work or meeting up with people with the virus. This is one of the key reasons their cases keep going up and their lockdown keeps getting extended.

No one wants an extended lockdown so the number one thing everyone can do now is reduce contact with anyone outside of your bubble.

I especially ask that anyone who is a worker at an essential service to not go to work until you get a negative result and employers have been advised of this too.

This morning I asked our public health team how our compliance was looking, and it was heartening to hear that people they are contact tracing are still at home. That is exactly what we need. We just need that

to continue, because that means our locations of interest will eventually stop growing.

On location of interests, I do have an update.

You'll recall that some days ago we talked about genome sequencing helping us to narrow the likely source of covid to an individual who arrived in NZ on the 7<sup>th</sup> of August. We said at that time that we were keeping our options open. That was because we didn't have a complete sequence. But it was enough to give us 90% confidence in our theory.

That sequence was then rerun, and we received the results yesterday. The results of that give us even greater confidence in the match. On that basis, we are now removing locations of interest that pre date the 7<sup>th</sup> of August, including Lynn Mall. We ask that everyone from these locations still of course comply with level 4 restrictions, but you no longer need report for additional testing.

This is an example of how the science can help us narrow the public health measures that are needed in an outbreak. It was absolutely right though, in a delta environment, for our public health team to be cautious in their approach till we had evidence to the contrary.

Just a couple of quick pieces of information before we wrap today.

Isolation can impact on your ability to access food.

If you are sick, or cannot leave home to buy food you can ask family, whanau, friends or neighbours to make a contactless drop off of groceries for you.

If you are delivering supplies to someone, remember to stay 2 metres apart and wear a face covering. Ideally, drop things on someones door step, and leave.

You can also use your supermarket's click and collect service, and ask a local friend, family member or neighbour to drop off the groceries for you.

As I said compliance and reducing contact is critical to stopping the virus spreading.

Overall compliance has been outstanding. We are seeing similar level of reductions in traffic and movements as the last time we were at level 4.

Since Alert Level 4 came into place, 17 people have been charged with a total of 20 offences nationwide.

Of the 20 charges filed, 11 are for Failing to Comply with the COVID-19 order, 7 for Failure to Comply with Direction/Prohibition/Restriction and 2 for Health Act Breaches.

In the same time period, 53 formal warnings were issued.

Police have also issued 70 infringements nationwide including 61 to people who failed to remain at current home and 5 for persons who failed to wear a face covering.

Those numbers really are low – so thank you everyone for sticking to a plan we know works

Even if we know we have a plan that works, I know the uncertainty of these periods is tough, and has a real impact on mental health.

Please do not forget to reach out to friends, family and whānau who may be struggling, a phone calls, video chat and messages all help.

Local GPs are still working at Alert Level 4. And can provide advice on how to get help to support your mental wellbeing during Alert Level 4 – including phone and video consultations.

You can also call 1737 for free to talk to a trained counsellor.

There is more information about how to access the range of mental health support services on the [COVID19.govt.nz](https://www.covid19.govt.nz) website so please check them out and I do encourage anyone to use them.

I'll now take questions.