

May / Mei 2022

Public Health Bulletin

Teena koutou katoa and Eid Mubarak. We hope you enjoy the latest edition of the Public Health Bulletin.

COVID-19 Update

New Zealand is in Phase 3 of the Omicron response plan and at Orange in the traffic light system. As of 2 May 2022, travellers from visa-waiver countries and those with valid-visas can now travel to New Zealand isolation-free.

New Zealand's vaccination rate has reached 96% for first doses, 95% for second doses and 73% for boosters. People 18 and over can have a booster at least 3 months after their primary vaccinations, while people 16 and 17 years old must wait for at least 6 months for their booster. If you've had COVID-19 wait three months until you have a COVID-19 vaccination. Book your vaccines or find your nearest walk-in clinic at

<https://bookmyvaccine.covid19.health.nz/>

Reporting positive RAT results

You should report the results of your rapid antigen test (RAT) if you test positive or negative. You can do this online through My Covid Record or by calling the helpline. <https://covid19.govt.nz/testing-and-tracing/covid-19-testing/report-your-rat-with-my-covid-record/> This ensures appropriate people are informed of the test result, and that appropriate care and wraparound support can be provided as needed.

Flu vaccinations are coming

Protect yourself and your whaanau from the flu this winter. Flu vaccines are now available. Flu vaccines are free for some people who are most likely to get very sick, including:

- Pregnant women at any trimester
- People aged ≥65
- People aged <65 with any of the medical conditions listed at [schedule.pharmac.govt.nz/ScheduleOnline.php](https://www.pharmac.govt.nz/ScheduleOnline.php)
- Children aged <4 who has been hospitalised for respiratory illness or have a history of significant respiratory illness

If you're eligible for a free flu shot, contact your GP or usual healthcare provider to make a booking.

COVID-19 and influenza season 2022

By Shaina Pinares Garcia

Dr Shaina Pinares Garcia is a senior house officer at Waikato Public Health Unit.

Flu (influenza) season is upon us. With the borders opening and community immunity to the flu being low, people are more at risk of becoming severely unwell. The COVID-19 vaccines do not protect against the flu and vice versa. It is recommended to have one of the new flu vaccines this year even if you had one last year as this year's vaccines target different viral strains.

You can have any of the vaccines on the National Immunisation Schedule at the same time, immediately before, or after a COVID-19 vaccine. This includes MMR (measles-mumps-rubella), Tdap and Boostrix vaccines.

If you are haapu / pregnant, trying for a pregnancy, or breastfeeding, it is safe to have both the COVID-19 vaccine and the flu vaccine.

If you are getting the COVID-19 vaccine, it is safe to have the flu vaccines at the same time. There may be special rules to follow if you are over 65, if you have had COVID-19, or have been unwell with another infection. Please check with the Influenza Immunisation Programme at influenzaimmunisation@health.govt.nz.

Boostrix-IPV in pregnancy

The whooping cough vaccine is safe for use in pregnancy. Whooping cough immunisation is free for pregnant women in the second or third trimester of pregnancy, and recommended from 16 weeks' gestation onwards. Being immunised while you are pregnant can provide added protection for your baby. We are expecting the return of whooping cough with the borders opening up, and vaccination during pregnancy is the best way to protect newborns who are the most vulnerable.

For more information on immunisation in pregnancy, please refer to: <https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/healthy-living/immunisation/immunisation-during-pregnancy#:~:text=Whooping%20cough%20immunisation%20is%20free,safe%20for%20use%20in%20pregnancy>.

To test or not to test...

The Public Health Unit regularly receives phone calls from colleagues in Primary Care. In this case, a GP called to ask for advice on whether to do a PCR test and typing on a patient with COVID-19 like symptoms. They were unsure if this was an old but not resolving infection or a second infection with COVID-19. This was the response below.

From Dr Chris Mansell, Clinical Microbiologist:

A not uncommon situation we're seeing are people who have had mild illnesses with positive RAT a few weeks ago, presenting acutely with a more severe illness, perhaps with a positive SARS-CoV-2 RAT test. These people do not need to get Whole Genome Sequencing (WGS) unless they have recently travelled overseas, as they are unlikely to have had a PCR/WGS with the initial illness to be a comparison.

Unless there is something else unusual about the case, they could be considered historical non-infectious COVID-19 with a new, other respiratory illness.

It is also important to bear in mind that there will also be a few people who have had false positive RAT tests in the past or no documentation of their RAT result and later develop COVID-19. People in the community with acute respiratory illness or Influenza-like illness should also have a NPS for Influenza PCR.

ESR are keen to get WGS samples to look for new variants. Candidates would be:

- Recent contact with overseas travellers
- And new COVID-19 like illness

It is difficult to get a strain type if it is a weak positive (i.e., CT >30), so please send the swab in the first 3 or 4 days of illness if possible, not wait until after a week from symptom onset.

Te Awamutu Maaori Women's Welfare League Open Day

The Te Awamutu branch of the Maaori Women's Welfare League hosted an open day on the 1st of May. Among other things, information on the MMR vaccine was handed out and the importance of protecting our community against measles, mumps and rubella was discussed.



Welcoming Communities

By Karen Jansen

Last year, Hamilton City Council was accepted into Immigration New Zealand's Welcoming Communities. In April this year Council sector and community representatives met together in a signing ceremony to endorse the Welcoming Communities Plan with Council and local hapu signatories.

<https://ourhamilton.co.nz/community-environment/kia-ora-a-warm-welcome-to-kirikiri-roa>



Sector representatives from Waikato DHB, Sharma, Red Cross, Hamilton Multicultural Services Trust, The office of Ethnic affairs



The Commitment Signing Event

Refugees on the move

By Karen Jansen

Waikato has welcomed many refugees into our community since the borders have reopened. Families from the Middle East, Africa and Colombia and others have been received. The evacuees and family reunifications from Afghanistan have also made their home here, coming from traumatic situations. One aspect of their sudden departures is the lack of health screening.

GP's should be aware when enrolling these families that screening is a necessary part of their health journey and that they may not have had offshore Immigration medicals such as or X-rays or TB screening. Community law took on the Afghan National vs. Minister of Immigration case and won. They argued that Immigration were wrong to put the Refugee Support cases on hold while the border was restricted and they were wrong to decline the critical purpose visas under humanitarian circumstances.

Following this Court Case, there were large implications for Immigration as it meant they had to process all the Residency visas they had unlawfully put on hold (not just the Refugee Family Support visas). Afghan Nationals can't get any medical checks in Afghanistan now so the medicals are either not done or historic.

New Zealand and Australia have jointly agreed that New Zealand will resettle up to 150 refugees per year for three years from Nauru who are subject to Australia's regional processing arrangements. These refugees will be processed through the quota refugee programme. <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/media-centre/news-notifications/new-zealand-australia-resettlement-arrangement> The 2022 Special Ukraine Policy will be open for one year and enable New Zealand citizens and residents in New Zealand who were born in Ukraine or are Ukrainian citizens to sponsor their parents, grand-parents, adult siblings and adult children and their immediate family. <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/about-us/media-centre/news-notifications/important-information-for-ukrainian-nationals>

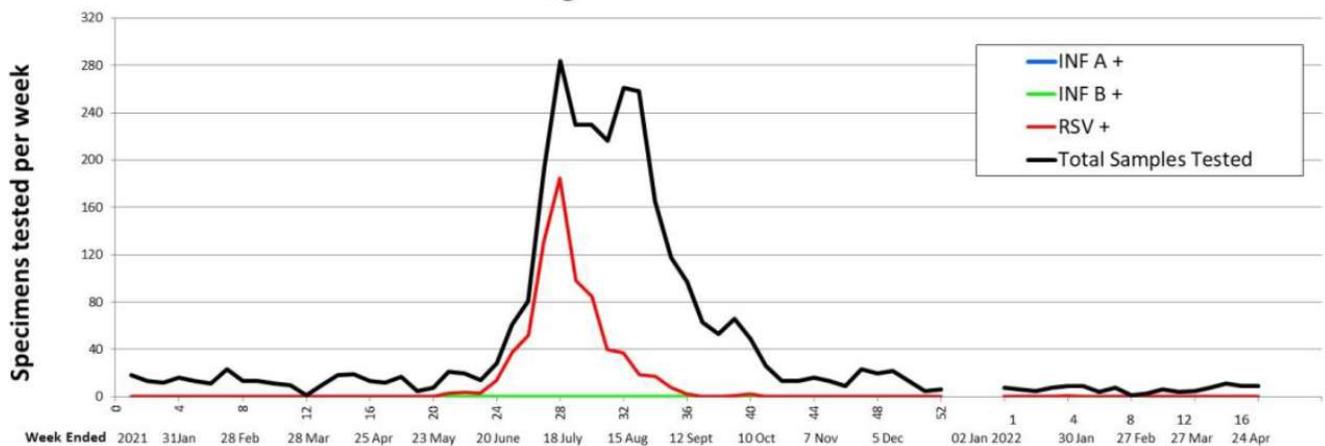
Waikato Respiratory Virus Report

Thank you to Dr Chris Mansell, Clinical Microbiologist, for this report.

There's still not much except SARS-CoV-2 at the moment. Rhinoviruses are present. As of 3 May 2022, new viruses have not yet arrived since opening the borders. Two cases of Influenza A have been informally reported from other parts of Aotearoa New Zealand.

Australia has seen an increase in laboratory diagnosed Influenza A in the April, both H1 and H3. [https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/cda-surveil-ozflu-flucurr.htm/\\$File/flu-02-2022.pdf](https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/cda-surveil-ozflu-flucurr.htm/$File/flu-02-2022.pdf) This shows that conditions in that country are permissive for exponential growth and an early Influenza season.

Respiratory Syncytial Virus and Influenza Detection Waikato Region 2021 and 2022



Correct as of 3 May 2022

Notifiable diseases – April 2022 compared to April 2021 (Waikato DHB)

Notifiable diseases (Waikato DHB) - Period: April 2021 to April 2022

¹Number of cases. Source: Waikato DHB.

²Waikato YTD count as a proportion of national data.

Disease name	Waikato ¹			YTD		
	2021	2022	Change 2021-2022	Waikato	National	% ²
Botulism	0	0	0 -	0	0	-
Bruceellosis	0	0	0 -	0	0	-
Campylobacteriosis	30	28	-2 ▼	169	1,641	10
Chikungunya fever	0	0	0 -	0	0	-
Cholera	0	0	0 -	0	3	0
COVID-19	0	20,149	20,149 ▲	80,091	918,869	9
Cryptosporidiosis	4	7	3 ▲	10	75	13
Decompression sickness	0	0	0 -	0	0	-
Dengue fever	0	0	0 -	0	0	-
Diarrhoeic shellfish poisoning	0	0	0 -	0	0	-
Diphtheria	0	0	0 -	0	0	-
Gastroenteritis - unknown cause	0	0	0 -	1	41	2
Gastroenteritis / foodborne intoxication	0	3	3 ▲	8	56	14
Giardiasis	19	2	-17 ▼	33	206	16
Haemophilus influenzae type b	0	0	0 -	0	1	0
Hepatitis A	0	2	2 ▲	2	8	25
Hepatitis B	0	1	1 ▲	1	10	10
Hepatitis C	0	0	0 -	0	12	0
Hepatitis NOS	1	0	-1 ▼	0	0	-
Hydatid disease	0	0	0 -	0	1	0
Invasive pneumococcal disease	0	5	5 ▲	6	97	6
Latent tuberculosis infection	1	0	-1 ▼	1	29	3
Lead Poisoning	2	2	0 -	10	103	10
Legionellosis	0	1	1 ▲	2	63	3
Leprosy	0	0	0 -	0	2	0
Leptospirosis	1	1	0 -	6	41	15
Listeriosis	0	0	0 -	0	10	0
Listeriosis - perinatal	0	0	0 -	0	2	0
Malaria	0	0	0 -	0	1	0
Measles	0	0	0 -	0	3	0
Meningococcal disease	0	0	0 -	0	10	0
Mumps	0	1	1 ▲	1	4	25
Murine Typhus	0	0	0 -	0	0	-
Paratyphoid Fever	0	0	0 -	0	3	0
Pertussis	0	0	0 -	0	4	0
Q fever	0	0	0 -	0	0	-
Rheumatic fever - initial attack	1	0	-1 ▼	0	24	0
Rheumatic fever - recurrent attack	0	0	0 -	0	1	0
Rickettsial disease	0	0	0 -	0	1	0
Ross River virus infection	0	0	0 -	0	0	-
Rubella	0	0	0 -	0	0	-
Salmonellosis	9	3	-6 ▼	20	248	8
Shigellosis	0	0	0 -	1	7	14
Taeniasis	0	0	0 -	0	1	0
Tetanus	0	0	0 -	0	0	-
Toxic shellfish poisoning	0	0	0 -	0	0	-
Tuberculosis disease - new case	5	2	-3 ▼	10	90	11
Tuberculosis disease - relapse or reactivation	0	0	0 -	0	1	0
Tuberculosis infection - on preventive treatment	0	0	0 -	0	2	0
Typhoid fever	0	0	0 -	0	2	0
VTEC/STEC infection	17	12	-5 ▼	43	425	10
Yersiniosis	12	6	-6 ▼	26	394	7

¹Number of cases. Source Waikato DHB.

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

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

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. 22041 or 22020

Notifications outside Hamilton: 0800 800 977 **Fax:** 07 838 2382 **Email:** notifiablediseases@waikatodhb.health.nz

Did you enjoy our bulletin? Please share it with your colleagues

Previous Bulletins at: www.waikatodhb.health.nz/for-health-professionals/public-health-bulletins/