

MEDIA RELEASE

31 August 2021

Planned Care returns under Alert Level 3

Nelson Marlborough Health will begin to reintroduce Planned Care under Alert Level 3. The DHB has considered the clinical patient need alongside patient and staff safety and the reality of operating in a health system that is responding to the current COVID-19 outbreak.

Chief Executive Lexie O’Shea said urgent and non-deferrable surgical care continued during Alert Level 4, with outpatient appointments operating via telehealth services.

“The need for Planned Care doesn’t disappear when we change Alert Levels. As we shift down to Level 3 there is the opportunity to reassess the risks to allow for some Planned Care to occur.”

“It isn’t as simple as “pressing go”. As a health system in a pandemic, consideration needs to be given to constraints such as workforce and facilities, as well as the broader impacts on partners such as tertiary centres and laboratory services.”

“Not only do we have staff redeployed to support activities such as contact tracing, swabbing and vaccinations but our colleagues in primary and community care, who would generally be involved in care post-discharge, do too.”

“We are mindful that while we have no cases of COVID-19 in our community, our tertiary centres who provide Intensive Care support, face the uncertainty of becoming over-burdened by COVID-19 cases.”

“Needless-to-say, we won’t be able to undertake Planned Care under the same priorities as business as usual, because we aren’t operating in business as usual.”

Under Planned Care priority is determined by clinical urgency and wait time, however during Alert Level 3 further considerations are required.

“We know from the 2020 lockdown that we need to prioritise those who already experience inequitable access to healthcare.”

“Anaesthesia and surgical services will also be looking at the likelihood of patients requiring intensive post-operative care and the risk and implications for the type of surgery.”

Direct contact will be made with those affected by the Alert Level 3 changes to Planned Care.

“Our administrative team have been working extremely hard over the past few weeks to keep patients informed of changes and impacts to their care during Alert Level 4. They will continue this direct approach over the coming weeks as decisions are made around prioritisation of Planned Care.”

“Things may look a little different for people coming into appointments. We take safety measures such as hand hygiene, mask wearing, record keeping, physical distancing and visitor restrictions seriously. These measures are in place to protect patients, staff and our health system.”

“We don’t have to look far to realise the impact of Delta. We are so fortunate to be in a position to be having a conversation about returning to Planned Care at Alert Level 3.”

-END-

Nelson and Wairau Hospitals during Alert Level 3

At Alert Level 3 our hospitals are open but things may look a little different as we work to keep each other safe.

- It is a requirement for staff and patients to wear masks in healthcare settings.
- Record keeping is mandatory at healthcare facilities. Staff and patients need to sign-in or keep a record of their attendance.
- Hospital attendees will be asked COVID-19 screening questions on entry.
- To minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission visitor restrictions are in place.
 - In the inpatient setting (when people stay overnight) this means:
 - Visiting hours are strictly 2.30pm-8pm
 - Visitors are restricted to family members or support people only.
 - Up to three visitors may be nominated by the patient to visit.
 - One visitor may visit the patient at a time.
 - Children under the age of 16 are restricted from visiting.
 - Exceptions to the above (e.g. compassionate grounds) require approval by the manager in charge.
 - In the outpatient setting (where people attend and appointment) this means:
 - No support person may accompany the patient unless exceptional circumstances.
 - Exceptions to the above (e.g. disability, interpreter, parent) require approval by the manager in charge.

Contact:

Stephanie Gray, Communications Manager, Nelson Marlborough Health
03 546 1824 / 027 4466 799 / stephanie.gray@nmdhb.govt.nz