

MEDIA RELEASE

24 January 2022

Response to Omicron in Nelson Marlborough

Case Update – Attribution to Dr Stephen Bridgman, Medical Officer of Health, Nelson Marlborough Health

- New cases – 2 confirmed, 1 probable
- Active cases – 13

The Ministry of Health has announced a further 2 cases of COVID-19 in Nelson Tasman. While whole genomic sequencing is yet to confirm the variant the cases attended events in Auckland and are reported as part of the January Omicron outbreak.

Dr Stephen Bridgman, Nelson Marlborough Health, Medical Officer of Health said: “The cases are from the same household, which is separate to the household previously reported. A probable case within this new household has also been identified. This person has yet to return a positive test but has symptoms consistent with COVID-19.

Locations of interest are updated hourly on the Ministry of Health website alongside advice for close or casual contacts. In particular Greenwood Health Centre in Motueka is listed as a close contact for Friday 21 January between 11.40am and 1.45 pm. People are advised to get a test and self-isolate immediately with a follow-up test on day five.

While there is no evidence of local community transmission from the testing which occurred over the weekend, we are keen to see strong testing numbers over the coming week to help us in our goal of trying to stamp out the local outbreak.

It is important for people who have symptoms to come forward for testing as there may be undetected community transmission. If a person is fully vaccinated, symptoms may be quite mild. While some of the common symptoms for the variant include a sore throat, headache or a new or worsening cough, we are also seeing atypical gastro-intestinal symptoms.

Why not take a moment now to establish a base-line as it were of what normal means for you. You can then use this to monitor any signs of changes to your normal health.

Under the COVID-19 Protection Framework Red is not a lockdown. Following the public health measures such as wearing a face mask, scanning in using the COVID-19 Tracer App and ensuring physical distancing are a core part of our collective response to slowing down the spread of Omicron.

These measures allow as much time as possible for people to receive their vaccinations and booster vaccinations. Vaccination has a huge effect on reducing the likelihood of hospitalisation and serious disease. It also reduces transmission of the virus. People are strongly encouraged to be fully vaccinated and to have a booster when eligible.”

Operational response – Attribution to Lexie O’Shea, Chief Medical Officer, Nelson Marlborough Health

Testing

- Testing across Nelson Marlborough over the weekend was 449 with 277 on Sunday, 172 on Saturday.

The team, mobilised by Nelson Bays Primary Health Organisation and general practices, were able to respond well to the testing demand over the weekend. We have been preparing for Omicron and we are ready. The speed and efficiency in which the team were able to coordinate and mobilise, is a good example of our system readiness.

This connectedness extends across Nelson Marlborough with support teams on standby in Marlborough if they are needed to mobilise to support ongoing demand in Nelson Tasman.

Vaccination

- 2001 adult and 781 paediatric doses were given across Nelson Marlborough over the weekend.

Our vaccination efforts are another demonstration of connectedness with the team including Te Piki Organa, Primary Health Organisations, Pharmacies, general practices, DHB Community Nursing teams, Iwi and Marae, to name but a few.

Nelson Marlborough has 96% partially vaccinated and 94% fully vaccinated. 64% of those eligible for booster dose have received one.

Yesterday we confirmed a significant vaccination capacity expansion plan to the Ministry. This looked at capacity across the system in pharmacy, primary care, iwi providers and vaccination centres to ensure access to childhood vaccination, primary, secondary and booster doses.

Planning is underway for an additional 4 or 5 kaupapa Māori, marae-based clinics this week to help support demand. We are conscious that vaccination rates in our Māori population are not as strong at 89% partially vaccinated and 84% fully vaccinated. This disparity is seen across primary and secondary, boosters and childhood vaccination programmes.

We are fortunate in New Zealand to be in a position to watch Omicron as it has spread across the world. From this we know that vaccination rates make a difference for the protection of individuals and our health system.

Thank you to those who are up-to-date with their vaccinations. Now is the time to check whether it has been four months since your second dose and make the most of the variety of clinic options available including walk-ins, late nights and community pharmacy. The Healthpoint website has a list of all the places across Nelson Marlborough.

Hospital preparedness

Our hospitals are business as usual under the COVID-19 Protection Framework Red, with surgery and outpatient appointments continuing as planned. You do not need to show your vaccine passport to receive healthcare. Visitor restrictions are in place, including the requirement for visitors to wear a mask. Further details can be found on our website.

At times like this we can work together to ensure that care is being provided in the most appropriate place. Anyone with COVID-19 symptoms should get a test and isolate until they receive a negative result. They should not attend the emergency department.

Our Emergency Departments are a really precious resource for when a life is at risk. If it isn't an emergency, please see your general practitioner or for urgent health concerns visit an urgent medical centre. If you are unsure, try calling a health service such as Healthline or Plunket line for advice.

Prior to Christmas our hospital teams have been able to strengthen our ability to respond to COVID-19 with an additional six respiratory isolation rooms in the Nelson Hospital emergency department. Streaming of COVID-19 patients has also been boosted particularly in the ICU with the reconfiguring of space allowing for a four-room negative airflow red zone. As a newer hospital, Wairau Hospital did not require the same scale of facility change with a focus on maximising airflow.

Across the system we have been upskilling staff and recruiting where able. It is well understood that there is a shortage of healthcare professionals in New Zealand with Nelson Marlborough Health as no exception. Protecting our health system from Omicron is important to ensure we maintain our ability to deliver on usual healthcare needs. And we appreciate the support our community has shown in this endeavour.

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Location of interest

Nelson Tasman residents and visitors are asked to monitor Ministry of Health's locations of interest page, and follow the instructions given on that page if you've been at a location of interest. There is a list on this page and also a map for quick-reference: [COVID-19: Contact tracing locations of interest | Ministry of Health NZ](#)
Marlborough residents and visitors should monitor this page also if they have travelled to the Nelson Tasman region in the past 14 days.

When and where to get tested

We ask anyone with symptoms – no matter how mild – to please get tested, even if they are vaccinated. Read about symptoms to be alert to on the Ministry of Health website: [About COVID-19 symptoms and spread | Ministry of Health NZ COVID-19](#)

COVID-19 testing locations

1. Walk-in, no appointments needed

Nelson CBAC: Saxton Field parking area (near Oaklands Milk), Suffolk Rd, Stoke

- Daily (Monday-Sunday) 9am-6pm

Motueka CBAC: Motueka Recreation Centre, Old Wharf Road, Motueka

- Monday 24 January – Friday 28 January 9am-5pm

CBAC hours will be kept up-to-date on the Healthpoint website: [Nelson Marlborough COVID-19 CBACs | HealthPoint](#)

2. By appointment at medical centres (GP) please phone ahead first

All locations and hours available on the Healthpoint website. Find an option closest to you: [COVID-19 Testing | Nelson Marlborough | HealthPoint](#)

Vaccination advice

People living in Marlborough, Nelson, and Tasman are reminded to get vaccinated if they have not already. Everyone aged 5 years and over is eligible for free COVID-19 vaccination. Booster doses are also now available to anyone aged 18+ who had their second dose 4 month ago.

[Vaccination clinic locations across the region are listed on Healthpoint here.](#)

Contact:

Natasha Hoskins, Communications Manager, Nelson Marlborough Health
0272764259 / natasha.hoskins@nmdhb.govt.nz