

MEDIA RELEASE

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Need care? We're still here

As we continue into the third week of the level 4 lockdown period, Nelson Marlborough healthcare professionals urge people not to put off calling their doctor or practice nurse if they are unwell.

Dr Nick Baker, Nelson Marlborough Health Chief Medical Officer and Karen Winton, Acting Chief Executive of Nelson Bays Primary Health, remind people that Healthline, GP clinics (health centres), pharmacies, urgent care centres (after-hours) and emergency departments are open for business during the level 4 lockdown period.

They urge anyone with health needs to get attention, do not let little problems develop into major issues before getting help.

“Please don’t wait until the end of weekends, public holidays, or until the end of the lockdown period, to seek medical attention. What may start as a minor issue could become serious if you leave it too long,” Dr Baker says. “We have seen cases recently where people have put off getting health care and illnesses have got worse”

“On public holidays like ANZAC day, people can contact their local urgent care clinic or call the general Healthline number for advice. For emergencies, people shouldn’t hesitate to call 111 or go to a hospital emergency department. Our teams are there to provide care and that hasn’t changed during the COVID-19 response or lockdown period.”

Karen Winton encourages anyone to call their GP clinic for advice.

“Many people will continue to need care for existing or new health conditions, as well as seek medical help for any COVID-19 concerns.

“These are extraordinary times and require extraordinary measures. But the message is clear, general practice (your family doctor) and urgent care centres are open for business, even if that business is delivered in a slightly different way.

“Patients will still be seen ‘in-person’ if required. Other people may be offered a consultation by phone, email or video-call. You might also be seen by a nurse or doctor in your call, in a practice carpark. We are doing things differently, to keep people safe during COVID-19, but care is still here.”

Mrs Winton encourage older people especially to reach out for help.

“If you are over 70s and not meant to be leaving your home during the lockdown period, please call your GP first for a phone assessment. If you need to be seen, come in and they will make sure you are safe when you visit. Using a car to seek essential health care is allowed, and the sooner you are assessed, the better your health outcome will usually be.”

Dr Baker emphasises that people should not delay seeking help for urgent needs due to fear of leaving their bubble and being at risk of being infected with COVID-19.

“New Zealand hospitals follow international best practice for infection prevention. Things will look different when you go to an after-hours clinic or ED. You may be screened – asked questions about your symptoms – at the door for example, given a mask to wear, or assessed in a cabin outside of the main building. These are all precautions to keep you and others safe from infection,” Dr Baker says.

For more information about where to get healthcare in the Nelson Marlborough region, go to:

www.nmdhb.govt.nz/healthcare/

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