



1 September 2020

Dear Parents and Caregivers

### **Returning to school at COVID-19 Alert Level 2**

With cases of COVID-19 in Auckland, you may know someone who has tested positive, or hear about a case. Unless you have been close to someone who has been confirmed with COVID it is very unlikely you or your child is at risk of infection.

If we think your child has been close to someone confirmed with COVID, Auckland Regional Public Health Service will contact you directly. We will be working with your child's school if there is a confirmed case in the school.

We understand parents may have concerns, but it is safe for children to return to school.

Children and young people do not need to wear face coverings at school or on school buses. While children can get COVID-19 and can transmit the virus to other people, experience in New Zealand and overseas shows COVID-19 does not infect or affect children and teens in the same way it does adults. Compared to other places, schools and early learning services are not environments where we have seen significant spread of COVID-19.

### **Protecting your whānau**

The most important thing you and your whānau can do to keep as safe as possible is:

- Washing and drying your hands often and thoroughly. Use a hand sanitiser when you don't have soap and water on hand.
- Covering coughs and sneezes with your elbow, or tissues, and washing your hands straight afterwards.
- Staying home from school or work if you are sick.
- Wearing a face covering, such as a face mask or bandana, if you are out in public and can't maintain a safe distance from others (eg, public transport).
- Regularly cleaning surfaces, such as bench tops, taps and tables.
- Practising safe physical distancing whenever possible
- Keeping track of where you've been. Download the [NZ COVID Tracer app](#) or keep a diary or notebook of your movements.

### **As your child, or children, settle back into school, it's important to remember the following:**

- If your child is sick with **any** of the symptoms of COVID-19 (see below), please keep them at home, call your doctor or Healthline (0800 358 5453) for advice, and arrange for them to [get](#)

[a COVID-19 test](#) as quickly as possible.

- If you have been advised by Auckland Regional Public Health Service that your child is a close contact of someone with COVID-19, keep your child at home in self-isolation. They will need to get a COVID-19 test. A close contact is someone who has been close to a person with COVID-19 and who is therefore at greater risk of getting sick too (and potentially infecting others).
- If your child is tested for COVID-19 for any reason and they return a **positive** result (i.e. they have the virus):
  1. Auckland Regional Public Health Service will be in direct contact with you.
  2. Please keep your child home from school and carefully follow the instructions and advice given to you by the public health service.
  3. You **do not** need to contact the school; the public health service will contact them directly.
  4. The service will also contact anyone else from the school, students and/or staff, who are close contacts of your child (as well as any close contacts from outside of school).

### **COVID-19 symptoms**

The symptoms of COVID-19 can include one or more of the following:

- New or worsening cough
- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Fever
- Temporary loss of smell
- Difficulty breathing

**More advice and information** is available at [www.arphs.health.nz](http://www.arphs.health.nz) and <https://covid19.govt.nz/>. **Or call Healthline:** 0800 358 5453. Healthline is a free, 24/7 service with interpreters available.

Thank you for your support in helping keep your whānau, school and wider community well.

Medical Officer of Health  
**Auckland Regional Public Health Service**