

10 March 2020

Dear Parents and Caregivers

Thank you for your letter of 8 March sharing your concerns for the welfare of the family impacted by COVID-19.

You will be pleased to know the family and children are doing well and being well looked after. The parents are experiencing mild symptoms and the children continue to have no symptoms and remain in self-isolation.

The clinical decision on whether to test a person is based on both the epidemiology of the virus as well as its clinical presentation. National guidelines have been developed based on expert advice on who should be tested for COVID-19.

This is being regularly reviewed and you can keep up to date through the Ministry's website: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-resources-health-professionals/case-definition-covid-19-infection>

In relation to the clinical criteria for testing the person needs to be displaying clinical symptoms consistent with COVID-19. Any household contact who has symptoms or any who develop symptoms are tested. We can assure you that the school community will be notified of any confirmed case.

We know a lot more about the virus today than we did in the early stages. The Report of the WHO-China Joint Mission on Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) suggests:

- COVID-19 spreads less efficiently than influenza.
- Disease in children appears to be relatively rare and mild with approximately 2.4% of the total reported cases reported amongst individuals aged under 19 years.

The main way the disease spreads is through respiratory droplets expelled by someone who is coughing. The risk of catching COVID-19 from someone with no symptoms at all is very low.

The chance of widespread community outbreak remains low. The Ministry is continuing the actions in the 'Keep it Out' phase and is now undertaking measures from the 'Stamp It Out' phase of our national pandemic response procedures. These procedures focus on effective public health measures based on the phase New Zealand is in.

At this stage, instead of things like school closures, current public health measures are focused on border management, early detection and isolation of cases, contact tracing and promotion of the importance of strict personal hygiene.



At the time of writing there are no children in New Zealand confirmed with a case of COVID-19. If your child is unwell, it is your choice to keep them home to follow self-isolation guidelines. If you would like more information, please visit the [Ministry of Health's](#) website or call Healthline on 0800 358 5453.

Thank you very much for sharing your concerns with us. With continued vigilance, the chance of widespread community outbreak is expected to remain low. We appreciate your support with this.

Yours faithfully,

Medical Officer of Health

Auckland Regional Public Health Service