



# Health and safety in certificated playgroups for COVID-19

**GUIDANCE FOR ALERT LEVELS 1 – 4**

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## Purpose of this document

This document summarises the public health measures and recommendations, to support health and safety at COVID-19 alert levels 1 – 4.

Additional public health measures help to prevent the spread of disease and to support contact tracing.

You will already have a plan for managing health and safety; this guidance will assist you to review and update that plan to reflect the public health measures at each alert level. Work with your staff to do this, including your elected health and safety representatives.

## Detailed Guidance

More detailed guidance for Alert Levels 1 & 2 is available in the below links.

<b>Guidance document</b>
<a href="#">COVID-19 guidance for <b>playgroups at Alert Level 2</b></a>
<a href="#">COVID-19 guidance for <b>certificated playgroups at Alert Level 1</b></a>

## Alert Level system

New Zealand's [4-level Alert System](#) specifies measures to be taken against COVID-19 at each level. The system helps people understand the current level of risk and the restrictions that must be followed.

The measures may be updated on the basis of:

- new scientific knowledge about COVID-19, and
- information about the effectiveness of intervention measures in New Zealand and elsewhere.

It is therefore possible that the information in this document might need to change. If this occurs, we will quickly advise you of this and update the content and disseminate.

The Alert Levels may be applied at a town, city, territorial local authority, regional or national level.

Specific public health measures may be agreed for early learning services which can differ from the measures applied to other organisations, businesses and individuals.

These measures will reflect the context of an early learning service environment, including the lower levels of risk for children and the controlled nature of the environment.

Further information on the alert system can be found on the [uniteforrecovery.govt.nz](https://uniteforrecovery.govt.nz) website.

## Health and Safety at Work Act

Depending on the structure of your organisation, you may have obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015.

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This is the case if you meet the definition of a 'person conducting a business or undertaking' (PCBU).

If you are a volunteer association with no employees, then these requirements don't apply, however they are still a good guide for you to consider how you are keeping your playgroup families safe.

For further information, please see:

[Who or what is a PCBU – WorkSafe](#)

To meet your requirements under the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 you must manage risks and protect adults and children/tamariki at your playgroup.

This means that your leadership team and parent community need to understand what the risks are and what they and you need to do to manage them. How you will do this needs to be planned, thought out and discussed.

Your plans should then be detailed in your health and safety plan.

The expectation is that playgroups will actively manage adherence to public health measures through your health and safety plan.

It's important that you discuss your approach to operating safely at each Alert Level with everyone attending playgroup.

WorkSafe recommend you talk with parents about which controls you'll use at each level.

This means everyone will understand how you intend to manage work safely and what they need to do to help.

WorkSafe also recommend you document your approach at each Alert Level approach so it can be shared with others. This will also make it easier to regularly review and update your approach.

Please also refer to the WorkSafe website for further information and advice regarding COVID-19:

[Covid-19 – WorkSafe](#)

[Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 - New Zealand Legislation](#)

## Public health measures and recommendations

Measure/risk	Alert Level 1	Alert Level 2	Alert Level 3	Alert level 4
<b>Overarching description / implication for education</b>	The disease is contained in New Zealand (but not overseas).  Schools, early learning services and kōhanga reo, tertiary education providers and workplaces are open, and must operate safely.	The disease is contained, but the risk of community transmission remains.  It is safe to send your children to schools, early learning services and kōhanga reo and tertiary education.  There will be appropriate measures in place.	High risk the disease is not contained.  Schools between years 1 to 10 and Early Childhood Education centres can safely open and as long as they meet specified health measures, and will have limited capacity. Home-based early learning services can operate. Children should learn at home if possible. Playcentres and playgroups will remain closed.	Lockdown in place. Likely that disease is not contained.  All educational facilities closed onsite – but open for distance learning
<b>Public health measures at all alert levels:</b>				
If people are sick, they should stay home (phone Healthline on 0800 358 5453 or their GP and get tested if they have flu-like symptoms)				
Wash and dry hands, cough into elbow, don't touch your face				
<u>Early learning services connected to a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19</u> must close on an individual or group basis for 72 hours to allow contact tracing and cleaning. They could be closed for a further 14 days (but open for distance learning) – you will work with public health units to manage this and the direction to close will come from the Medical Officer of Health				
Stringent self-isolation of those who display relevant symptoms of COVID-19, test positive for COVID-19, have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19, or have been overseas in the last 14 days – <a href="#">Ministry of Health information for self-isolation</a>				
PPE is not required or recommended as necessary in any educational facility by the Public Health Service				
Early Learning services are required to display QR Code posters for the NZ COVID Tracer App by 19 August 2020.				

Public health measures and recommendations that vary by level <sup>1</sup> :				
Measure/risk	Alert Level 1	Alert Level 2	Alert Level 3	Alert Level 4
<b>Children at higher-risk of severe illness from COVID-19 (e.g. those with underlying medical conditions, especially if not well-controlled)</b>	There are no restrictions on personal movement - all children/tamariki can safely attend early learning services.	Children/tamariki at higher-risk of severe illness from COVID-19 (e.g. those with underlying medical conditions, especially if not well-controlled) are encouraged to take additional precautions when leaving home.	N/A	N/A
<b>Staff at higher-risk of severe illness from COVID-19 (e.g. those with underlying medical conditions, especially if not well-controlled)</b>	There are no restrictions on personal movement – all adults are able to safely attend.	Adults at higher-risk of severe illness from COVID-19 (e.g. those with underlying medical conditions, especially if not well-controlled) are encouraged to take additional precautions when leaving home.	N/A	N/A
<b>Washing and drying hands</b>	Wash frequently with soap and water, and dry hands afterwards.  Cough and sneeze into elbow.	Wash frequently with soap and water, and dry hands afterwards.  Cough and sneeze into elbow.	N/A	N/A
<b>Self-isolation</b>	If children/tamariki or adults are sick, they must stay home (phone Healthline on 0800 358 5453 or their GP and get tested if they have flu-like symptoms).	If children/tamariki or adults are sick, they must stay home (phone Healthline on 0800 358 5453 or their GP and get tested if they have flu-like symptoms).	N/A	N/A

<sup>1</sup> NB there are no specific public health requirements for schools and early learning services at Alert Level 1. These are recommendations only and align with the [Golden Rules for Alert Level 1](#).

Measure/risk	Alert Level 1	Alert Level 2	Alert Level 3	Alert Level 4
<b>Playgroups connected to a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19</b>	<a href="#">Playgroups connected to a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19</a> must close for 72 hours to allow contact tracing and cleaning. They could be closed for a further 14 days – you will work with public health units to manage this and the direction to close will come from the Medical Officer of Health.	<a href="#">Playgroups connected to a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19</a> must close for 72 hours to allow contact tracing and cleaning. They could be closed for a further 14 days – you will work with public health units to manage this and the direction to close will come from the Medical Officer of Health.	N/A	N/A
<b>Hand sanitiser</b>	Hand sanitiser is not required.  If available, its use and location must be supervised by adults.	Hand sanitiser is not required.  If available, its use and location must be supervised by adults.	N/A	N/A
<b>Shared food</b>	Shared food platters can be used.	Ensure that children/tamariki have separate food containers and do not give and take food to and from each other. Food can be supplied in accordance with public health guidance.	N/A	N/A
<b>Indoor temperature</b>	Recommended indoor minimum temperature returns to 16 degrees Celsius.	Indoor minimum temperature needs to be increased to 18 degrees Celsius.	N/A	N/A

Measure/risk	Alert Level 1	Alert Level 2	Alert Level 3	Alert Level 4
<b>Physical distancing</b>	No physical distancing requirements for children/tamariki or adults.	There does not need to be a measurable physical distance between children/tamariki or children/tamariki and adults at playgroup. However adults should where practicable use 1m as a guide between themselves and other adults.	N/A	N/A
<b>Playgrounds</b>	Playgrounds can be used as normal.	Playgroups should not use shared public playgrounds.	N/A	N/A
<b>Cleaning</b>	Disinfect and clean all surfaces after each session.	Disinfect and clean all surfaces regularly during sessions.	N/A	N/A
<b>Contact tracing</b>	Contact tracing registers are not required at Alert Level 1. As is usual practice you will need to continue to record child attendance and visitors coming on-site.  Ensure contact details are up-to-date in case they needed for tracing purposes.	Contact tracing registers must be in place to identify which children/tamariki and adults are present at playgroup, and keep track of any visitors.  Playgroup premises are required to display QR Code posters for the NZ COVID Tracer App by 19 August 2020.	N/A	N/A
<b>PPE</b>	PPE is not required or recommended as necessary in any educational facility by the Public Health Service.	PPE is not required or recommended as necessary in any educational facility by the Public Health Service.	N/A	N/A



## General guidance

### Good hygiene practices

Good hygiene practices will continue to be a priority at all levels as the best way to minimise potential spread of COVID-19. The [uniteforrecovery.govt.nz](https://uniteforrecovery.govt.nz) and [Ministry of Health](https://www.health.govt.nz) websites are a good source of information including:

- [Hand washing](#)
- [Cough and sneeze etiquette](#)
- [Cleaning surfaces](#)

There are [posters](#) available online to support you to convey key messages about hygiene.

Following basic hygiene measures are the best defence against COVID-19 including:

- cough or sneeze into your elbow or by covering your mouth and nose with tissues
- put used tissues in the bin or a bag immediately
- wash your hands with soap and water often (for at least 20 seconds)
- avoid close contact with people who are unwell
- don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean
- clean surfaces regularly.

The risk of infection increases the closer you are to someone who is infectious and the longer duration of time that you spend close to that person.

All staff and children with any COVID-like symptoms are being asked to stay at home, and we are asking services to send anyone home who has or develops any symptoms of illness.

Public Health officials have advised that if these measures are in place, then personal protective equipment is not needed.

### Staying home if sick

The vast majority of children and young people with symptoms consistent with COVID-19 will not have COVID-19.

Symptoms of COVID-19 can include new onset or worsening of one or more of the following:

- Cough
- Fever
- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Shortness of breath/difficulty breathing
- Temporary loss of smell

These symptoms are similar to a range of other illnesses, like influenza. Having them doesn't mean a person has COVID-19, but you should remain vigilant.

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Shortness of breath can indicate pneumonia, and requires urgent medical attention.

Children with asthma, hayfever, allergies, ear infections or other acute or chronic conditions may have similar symptoms.

Before a child is sent home, they should be feeling unwell and there should always be a conversation with the caregiver to determine whether there is another explanation for their child's symptoms that may mean that they do not pose a risk to others and do not need to go home.

## Cleaning

You should ensure there is a routine in place to disinfect and clean high touch surfaces (e.g. play gyms, tables, hard-backed chairs, doorknobs, light switches, remotes, handles, desks, toilets, sinks) at the end of each session.

In a space with crawling infants, this will include table legs and items a child uses to pull themselves up to a standing position.

In some settings, this cleaning may already be carried out by the building owner, or others on behalf of the playgroup.

There is some information about cleaning surfaces on the Unite for the Recovery and Ministry of Health websites:

[Cleaning surfaces – Unite for the Recovery](#)

[Cleaning following a suspected, probable or confirmed case of COVID-19 – Ministry of Health](#)

## Managing confirmed or probable cases

If there is a confirmed or probable case linked with your early learning service, you will be advised of this by the Medical Officer of Health.

Our regional Ministry of Education staff will work with you and local health authorities to agree a plan.

That will happen quickly and support will be provided to assist you to communicate with and support your parent community and staff.

If the person or persons who are a confirmed or probable case have worked in or attended your service when they could have been infectious (which could start 2 – 3 days prior to having symptoms) your service will be closed for at least 72 hours to allow time for contact tracing and a clean of the service to align with Ministry of Health guidelines.

Close contacts at your service would be anyone who had:

- face-to-face contact in any setting within two metres of a case for 15 minutes or more
- having been in a closed environment (e.g. hospital waiting room) within 2m of a case for 15 minutes or more

Close contacts will be required to self-isolate and will need to monitor for symptoms.

There is information about self-isolation and Factsheets for contacts on the Unite for the Recovery and Ministry of Health websites.

The Ministry has further information about what to do if you have a confirmed or probable case below:

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[Fact sheet: If you have a probable or confirmed case](#)

[Self-isolation – Unite for the Recovery](#)

[Fact sheets for contacts – Ministry of Health](#)

## Further closure for up to 14 days

In addition to closure for 72 hours for contact tracing, health authorities could require closure for longer periods of time, up to 14 further days.

This is likely to be because health authorities consider there could be risk of community transmission or there could be a large number of cases within an early learning service that mean a high proportion of children/tamariki and staff could be considered close contacts and therefore need to self-isolate.

## Support is available to you

Healthline is available to support anyone who might be experiencing symptoms or who has been asked to self-isolate - call for free on [0800 358 5453](tel:08003585453).

If you become aware of a case associated with your early learning service and you haven't received that notification from health authorities, please contact your local public health unit or your local Ministry of Education contact for information and support:

[Public health unit contacts](#)

[Local Ministry of Education contacts](#)

## General cleaning information following a suspected, probable or confirmed case

See this link for general cleaning principles:

[Cleaning following a suspected, probable or confirmed case of COVID-19 – Ministry of Health](#)

## Support contact tracing efforts

Keep displaying QR codes for the NZ COVID Tracer App.

Keep visitor registers and parent contact details up to date should they be required for contact tracing.

[About the NZ COVID Trace app – Ministry of Health](#)

## Links

- Worksafe information for COVID-19 – [WorkSafe website](#)
- Alert Levels information – [COVID-19 website](#)
- Ministry of Education - [COVID-specific information](#)
- You can keep in touch with your local District Health Board website and stay informed by updated Ministry of Health information on their website - [Public Health Units – Ministry of Health](#)
- For anyone with COVID-like symptoms, they should contact Healthline (for free) on [0800 358 5453](tel:08003585453) or phone their doctor immediately
- Please contact your regional ministry contact if you have any questions – [Local Ministry offices](#)



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