

Government Guidance during COVID-19

Vulnerable Staff

These guidelines are subject to change and will be updated as further evidence becomes available.

1. Who is at higher risk for COVID-19?

In line with government guidance, this list describes who is considered vulnerable to COVID-19.

Please note, both the HR and Health & Safety teams are available to help with advice, should you or your manager need it.

1.1. Pre-existing medical conditions

A major factor that can make COVID-19 a severe illness is a pre-existing medical condition. COVID-19 is especially dangerous if one or more of these conditions are not well controlled.

Relevant conditions include:

- Serious respiratory disease, such as chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
- Serious heart conditions
- Immunocompromised conditions
- Severe obesity — a body mass index (BMI) of 40 or higher
- Diabetes
- Chronic kidney disease
- People undergoing dialysis
- Liver disease.

Many conditions can cause a person to be immunocompromised, including:

- Cancer treatment
- Smoking related illness
- Bone marrow or organ transplantation
- Hematologic neoplasms
- Immune deficiencies
- Poorly controlled HIV or AIDS
- Prolonged use of corticosteroids and other immune weakening medications such as disease-modifying anti-rheumatic drugs.

1.2. Those 70 and over

The elderly, and in particular those with underlying health issues, are more vulnerable to COVID-19.

1.3. Pregnant women

Health experts do not yet know if pregnant women are impacted by COVID-19 in the same way as other people. However, pregnant women experience changes in their bodies that may increase their risk factors. As a precaution, the Ministry of Health are considering pregnant women as vulnerable.

2. Actions you can take to protect yourself

Staff should take extra precautions to protect themselves against all illnesses, including COVID-19 by,

- Avoiding contact with people who have cold or flu-like symptoms or diseases.
- Washing or sanitising your hands regularly – ensure you have access/supplies to do this.
- Performing proper protocols when coughing and sneezing – into the elbow, away from people.

Precautions staff should be taking specific to COVID-19 include,

- Staying at least 2 metres away from strangers or people outside your bubble.
- If you are unwell, avoid contact with people - especially those who are considered vulnerable.
- Following the advice given to you by health care professionals. For example, if you are considered vulnerable and are advised to wear a mask in public, you should do so.
- Seek out information and advice to protect yourself – the COVID-19 website is a great resource: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>