

COVID-19 FAQs

7 September 2021

ALERT LEVEL 2

This contains the most up-to-date and approved messaging on key COVID-19 matters.

Information that changes or is added between grids will be highlighted. Please ensure you are using the most up to date version.

This document answers frequently asked questions about what **Alert Level 2** means for areas of New Zealand.

This information applies from **7 September 2021 – 6.30pm.**

Information can be used for any government, agency, local government or relevant sector and business communications.

This is a living document that will be updated frequently. Information that changes or is added between versions will be highlighted. New sections and changes to messages are in **orange.**

Please ensure you are using the most up to date version.

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Alert Level status

Q. What is happening?

All of New Zealand, except Auckland, will move to Alert Level 2 at 11.59pm on Tuesday 7 September.

Auckland will stay at Alert Level 4 till until 11.59pm on Tuesday September 14.

Cabinet will review the levels for the whole country, including Auckland, on Monday 13 September.

Alert Level 2 looks different with Delta. There are several new requirements:

- Businesses must ensure customers can keep a record of where they have been – such as through the COVID Tracer App or otherwise – when visiting certain places such as restaurants, cinemas, concerts, churches, and close-contact businesses like hairdressers.
- A limit of 50 people applies for indoor gatherings, hospitality settings and event venues. 100 people can gather in outdoor settings.
- Keep 2 metres apart from people you do not know in public, and places like retail stores, libraries, gyms and museums
- Face coverings are mandatory for everyone aged 12 and over in indoor public facilities like libraries, museums and shopping malls.
- Face coverings are mandatory for customer-facing staff at hospitality venues, retail outlets and public facilities.

Alert Level 2 – there's still work to do. Everyone has a part to play in stopping the spread.

Q. What are the differences between Alert Level 3 and Alert Level 2?

Alert Level 2 allows a little more freedom, but restrictions still exist to ensure the community and New Zealand remains safe.

The virus changed with Delta, and that means we need to adjust too.

Face coverings and scanning in will be mandatory in more places, as more businesses and services can operate at Alert Level 2. It is encouraged that whenever you leave the house, you wear a face covering, other than when exercising, eating or drinking or at a workplace that is not public facing.

There are limitations on the number of people for all gatherings and hospitality settings – with a limit of 50 people in indoor venues, up to 100 people at outdoor venues.

Q: Can I expand my bubble at Alert Level 2?

You no longer need to keep to your bubble at Alert Level 2, and can socialise and attend gatherings of groups of up to 50 people indoors, and 100 people outdoors.

Remember: more people means more risk of virus transmission, so keep track of where you've been, and who you've seen in-person.

Q: Do the limits of 50 / 100 include staff as well?

Limits of 50 people at indoor hospitality venues, gatherings or event facilities does not include staff. Public-facing staff must wear face coverings.

Face coverings

Face coverings

In general, face coverings should be worn whenever you can. The Delta variant is more transmissible by droplets, so face coverings are a way we can protect ourselves and each other.

If you're around people you don't know, it's a good idea to wear a mask.

Q. Do customers in cafes and restaurants have to wear face masks?

In restaurants, bars and cafes face coverings are encouraged when you're not eating or drinking, as you will be seated and separated from others in a hospitality venue, but are not required when you're in cafes or restaurants.

Staff at hospitality settings are required to wear a face covering.

Q. Do I have to wear a face covering when I'm working out / exercising / at the gym?

Exercise and sports are difficult to do with a face covering. The face covering requirement does not apply to clients in gyms. However, people do need to maintain 2-metres distance from others, meaning indoor gym spaces may have to limit the number of people who can attend.

Employees in gyms – trainers and coaches – are encouraged to wear a face-covering, as they are public-facing in a business, with more opportunity to be in contact with a greater range of people.

The face-covering requirement does not apply to indoor sports – like indoor netball – but the rules on indoor gatherings do apply, and there can be no more than 50 people.

Masks are not mandatory for outdoor sports and exercise, as ventilation is not an issue. Outdoor social sports are treated as a gathering, so must be no more than 100 people.

Q. I work in an office, does that mean I have to wear a face covering to work?

Workplaces that are not open to the public (such as offices and factory floors) are a controlled environment. 1-metre distancing is required between employees, but face coverings are not required – as long as the business does not have any customers visiting the premises.

The 2-metre rule applies where people other than employees access the workplace, for example at reception.

Face-coverings are encouraged in workplaces if people want to wear them.

Some business are required to ensure that contact records are kept for everyone that enters, others are required to keep records of just customers and clients that enter. Businesses should check the requirements for their particular business on [COVID19.govt.nz](https://www.covid19.govt.nz).

Q: Where do I have to wear a face covering?

You legally must wear a face covering if you are aged 12 and over when:

- using public transport, airplanes (including in departure points such as train/bus stations) and in a taxi or ride-share vehicle
- visiting a healthcare or aged care facility (other than for a patient)
- inside retail businesses, such as supermarkets, pharmacies, shopping malls, indoor marketplaces and takeaway food stores
- visiting the public areas within courts and tribunals, local and central Government agencies, and social service providers with customer service counters

You legally must wear a face covering if you work:

- as a driver of a taxi or ride-share vehicle
- at close contact businesses, for example beauticians and hairdressers
- in a hospitality venue, for example a cafe, restaurant, bar or nightclub
- at retail businesses, such as supermarkets, shopping malls, indoor marketplaces, takeaway food stores
- in the public areas of courts and tribunals, local and central Government agencies, and social service providers with customer service counters

- at indoor public facilities, for example libraries and museums (but not swimming pools)

Q: If I am visiting my GP, do I need to wear a face covering?

No, but wearing a mask at the doctors surgery is encouraged.

Q: If I am visiting a hospital or aged care facility do I need to wear a mask?

Yes, visitors to a hospital or aged care facilities do need to wear a face covering.

Q: Do I have to wear a face covering at a theatre, movie or concert?

Face coverings are required in public spaces – such as collecting your ticket or purchasing food. Face coverings are recommended, but not required when you are seated at a movie or concert, to allow people to consume food or drink.

Travel and personal movement

Q. Can I travel at Alert Level 2?

Travel is less restricted for those people at Alert Level 2, you can travel domestically within Alert Level 2 regions, as long as you follow public health guidelines.

Travel around the country is still limited. Inter-regional travel between areas at Alert Level 2 is allowed but travel across Alert Level 4 boundaries is restricted. Checkpoints with the Police checking evidence for the need to travel will be in place at Alert Level 4 boundaries.

When leaving home, it's recommended to wear a face covering where appropriate.

At any Alert Level you should not leave home if you:

- have symptoms of COVID-19
- test positive for COVID-19.
- have been in close contact with someone who tests positive for COVID-19
- are a household contact of someone who was in a location of interest, until that person gets a negative test result at day 5. If you have not had any contact with the person who was at the location of interest, you can stop isolating as soon as they have a negative result.

Information about travel at Alert Level 2 can found on the Unite Against COVID-19 website.

Q. I am an Alert Level 4 worker who is able to travel to Auckland for permitted reasons – do my current Business Travel Documents work?

If your business has existing Business Travel Documents you can update these by logging into your existing request and adding the new boundary and worker details on the Business.govt.nz website

If you don't have existing Business Travel Documents you can apply for these on the Business.govt.nz website

Once these requests have been processed, your documents will be available for businesses to distribute to workers.

More detail on Business Travel Documents can be found here: Business travel across Alert Level Boundaries — business.govt.nz.

Q. Who must have a COVID-19 test for permitted travel over the Auckland Alert Level 4 boundary?

All Alert Level 4 workers who are permitted to cross the Auckland boundary will be required to have evidence of a COVID-19 test taken within the seven days before crossing.

The proof of test will be in addition to the Business Travel Document all workers need to carry when they travel in and out of Auckland.

The Ministry of Health has stood up a cross-Agency team who are working hard on the operationalisation of the new requirement for permitted workers crossing alert level boundaries to get tested.

The requirement for testing will come into effect on Thursday 9 September with workers having a 7-day period from then to get tested.

Permitted workers will need to show proof that they have completed a test before they cross the border, not proof they are COVID-19 free.

There is no cost for workers who get a test. See Healthpoint for testing locations.

Individuals who are travelling for permitted personal reasons should also be tested – noting this travel is often for urgent reasons and getting a test in time may not always be possible.

Q. Will there be any disruption to NZs supply chain? I.e. Will people notice any differences on the shelves?

No, the supply chain continues operating at all Alert Levels.

Q. Can someone travel for permitted reasons from Auckland to an Alert Level 2 area by car/truck/van. Can they stop along the way for necessities (food/toilet/petrol etc)?

People who are travelling for permitted personal or business reasons are able to stop along the way for necessities.

They must wear a face covering when visiting most businesses or services, keep 2-metre distancing from others, and maintain good hygiene including regular hand washing or sanitising. We recommend you scan in or keep a record of any place you had to stop.

Q. Can someone travel from Northland through Auckland and to their work in the Waikato?

There will be the ability for people to travel through Auckland if someone in Northland for instance, needs to get to the Waikato for their work.

But people will need to travel directly without stopping while going through Auckland. You will also need to carry evidence of the purpose of travel and the location where you are travelling to. You will not be required to have evidence of a test.

What do I need to know about public transport (buses, trains and commuter ferries) in Alert Level 2 regions?

To keep people safe the number of people who can gather together has been reduced. That means limiting the number of people who can travel on a bus, a train or a ferry. To do that, public transport services won't be able to carry standing passengers in Alert Level 2.

This new rule won't apply to dedicated school transport services.

It is important that you think ahead and plan your journey – there may not be enough seats available on the trip you would normally take, meaning that you may need to wait for the next service instead. If you normally travel at peak time, you might want to consider whether you can change your journey time.

Please continue to be respectful of drivers and other public transport staff and continue to wear a face covering and keep a record of your journey.

Q. Do you need to wear face coverings and scan to get on the Cook Strait ferries?

Face coverings are required for boarding the ferry and passengers should scan in as they would on other forms of transport.

When on the ferry, it may not be required to wear a face covering for the whole journey, as long as 2-metre physical distancing can be maintained from other passengers.

Q: Do I have to wear a face covering when taking a taxi or Uber?

Yes, face coverings are mandatory in taxis and ride-shares for both passengers and drivers.

Q: Can I go to work at Alert Level 2?

Business premises can open for staff and customers provided they meet public health requirements. Services can also be provided on customers' premises (for example, in homes).

Businesses legally must display NZ COVID Tracer QR codes, and many are required to ensure records are kept (whether via the NZ COVID Tracer app or otherwise).

While you can return to your workplace alternative ways are working are still encouraged.

Q. Can I stand on public transport?

To keep people safe we are reducing the number of people who can gather together. That means limiting the number of people who can travel on a bus, a train or a ferry. To do that, these services won't be able to carry standing passengers.

This new rule won't apply to dedicated school transport services.

It is important that you think ahead and plan your journey – there may not be enough seats available on the trip you would normally take, meaning that you may need to wait for the next service instead. If you normally travel at peak time, you might want to consider whether you can change your journey time.

Please continue to be respectful of drivers and other public transport staff, and continue to wear a face covering and keep a record of your journey.

If you are feeling unwell, do not travel, stay at home and get a test.

Sports and Recreation

Q. What recreation activities can I do at Alert Level 2?

Most recreation and sport is permitted – as long as it meets the Alert Level 2 requirements. Information about recreation at Alert Level 2 can be found on the Unite Against COVID-19 website.

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Q: Can I take my children to the playground at Alert Level 2?

Yes, at Alert Level 2, playgrounds can open.

Q: Can I play team sport at Level 2?

Yes, team sports are allowed at Alert Level 2, as long as they meet mandatory record keeping requirements and comply with the limitations on gatherings.

Shopping and services

Q: Where can I shop and what services can I access at Alert Level 2?

You can go in-store to shop, but you will need keep 2 metres apart from people. Wearing a face covering is required.

Full information on shopping and services allowed to open at Alert Level 2 can be found on the Unite Against COVID-19 website.

Q: Can I go to a restaurant or café?

Cafes, restaurants and takeaways can open at Alert Level 2, and must meet certain public health requirements.

You can dine in at cafes and restaurants. Public-facing staff – including baristas, cashiers, waiters and front-of-house – must wear face coverings.

Hospitality businesses legally must keep groups of customers separated and seated. Maximum of 50 people indoors or 100 people outdoors in a defined space.

Food delivery services, such as DeliverEasy and Uber Eats, can operate at Alert Level

Q. Can hairdressers, nail salons, tattoo parlours, and other close contact businesses open at Alert Level 2?

At Alert Level 2, businesses offering close contact personal care services, such as hairdressers and nail salons, can open.

Staff must wear face coverings for close contact services. For example a driving instructor, where 2-metre distancing is not possible in the car, must wear a face covering.

They also must meet other public health requirements including mandatory record keeping.

It is recommended that customers wear face masks where practicable when visiting close contact businesses also.

Q: Are animal and pet care services open at Alert Level 2?

Veterinary services can open.

If you are self-isolating, phone your veterinarian before you visit them or they visit you. If you are sick, call and reschedule.

Q: Can I have a tradesperson come to my house?

At Alert Level 2, plumbers, electricians, and tradespeople can come into your home. They will need to follow public health guidelines. Home-based cleaners can also work.

Q: Will post shops open?

Yes. NZ Post will also continue to deliver mail and courier drivers will continue to make contactless deliveries.

Doing business

Full information on doing business at Alert Level 2 can be found at the Unite Against COVID-19 website.

Q: Who can do business at Alert Level 2?

Business premises and workplaces can open for staff and customers provided they meet public health requirements.

This means complying with general Alert Level 2 settings, meeting appropriate public health requirements for the workplace (for example having contact tracing systems, face coverings, and physical distancing), and fulfilling all other health and safety obligations.

Businesses are still encouraged to use alternative ways of working if possible.

Close contact services can operate if they meet public health measures, including mandatory record keeping, wearing of face coverings, good hygiene practices and minimised contact to the greatest extent possible.

Q: Can event facilities operate?

Event facilities, including cinemas, stadiums, concert venues and casinos can have up to 50 people indoors and 100 people outdoors.

Large event facilities can have more than 50 people in the venue, but only if the people are in separate 'defined spaces' at all times and there should not be direct airflow between these spaces.

Bathroom and food facilities also need to be separated, or have other systems, to stop different groups of people mingling.

Q: My staff are coming into work (where they can't work from home) what should I do?

If you own or run a business where staff cannot work from home, make sure:

- employees keep 1 metre apart.
- you provide hygiene and cleaning products so workers can clean and disinfect shared surfaces, and wash and dry their hands.
- you display your QR code and have an alternative contact tracing system for people who cannot access a smartphone.

Q: Will record-keeping be mandatory for my business at Alert Level 2?

Yes, record keeping is a requirement for people aged 12 and over at all Alert Levels for busy places and events 7 days from 11.59pm Tuesday 7 September.

This is so contact tracing can happen quickly and may help prevent Alert Level changes. For more information about whether record-keeping will be mandatory for your business, see the Unite Against COVID-19 website.

Q: Will mask-wearing be mandatory for my business at Alert Level 2?

You legally must wear a face covering if you are a customer or an employee involving customer contact at a business or service operating at Alert Level 2.

You legally must wear a face covering:

- on public transport and at departure points, for example airports, train stations and bus stops
- on flights
- in taxi or ride-share vehicles — drivers and passengers
- when visiting healthcare facilities

- if you are a delivery driver to residential addresses
- inside any businesses and services that are open and involve customer contact, for example supermarkets, pharmacies, hospitality venues, takeaways, and petrol stations
- in the public areas of courts and tribunals, local and central government agencies, and social service providers with customer service counters.

Q: Can my business receive assistance at Alert Level 2?

Yes. Some support for businesses remains in place at Alert Level 2. See the Unite Against COVID-19 website for more information.

Q: What about travel to Alert Level 4 regions for workers?

There are new obligations for businesses and services who want workers to travel into or across an Alert Level 4 region to have systems and processes in place to reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19.

If travel is essential businesses should think about which of their workers need to travel, if any, and only allow those who need to travel to do so.

Businesses must have Business Travel Documents to cross the boundary, and can apply for these on the Business.govt.nz website

Where workers do need to travel to work, businesses should put in place mitigations for the risk this may create. Examples include rotating shifts to minimise the number of people they have contact with at work, and providing meals so that workers do not need to visit the supermarket or food businesses while at work.

Only Alert Level 4 businesses and services can travel across the Auckland Alert Level boundary. People will need to carry evidence of the need to travel, and businesses should only allow workers that absolutely need to travel across the boundary to do so. Testing may be required.

Education

Q. Can schools open at Alert Level 2?

At Alert Level 2, all early learning services, schools, kura and tertiary education facilities are open to everyone.

Schools should put extra public health control measures in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and keep staff, ākonga (students) and tamariki (children) safe. Children aged 12 and over are strongly encouraged to wear face coverings.

Schools should provide distance learning options for tamariki (children) who cannot attend school – for example, if they need to self-isolate.

School events or activities like performances, cultural events and sports can continue. Ākonga (students) and teachers do not need to physically distance.

Parents, carers and whānau who visit the school are recommended to wear masks and should try to keep 2 metres apart from people they do not know.

As always, tamariki who are feeling unwell are to remain at home, and get a test, when possible. They should continue to stay at home until a negative test is returned.

When will schools reopen at Alert Level 2?

Alert Level 2 begins for New Zealand other than Auckland at 11:59pm on Tuesday 7 September, an extra day has been allowed for schools to prepare for reopening. Schools are expected to reopen to students on Thursday 9 September.

Q: Will face coverings be required in schools?

Face covering are strongly recommended, but not required, to be worn at schools by those aged over 12 years and at tertiary institutions.

Staff in early learning services and schools are not required to wear face coverings at Alert Level 2.

Health officials have advised against the mandatory use of face coverings in schools for a range of reasons, most particularly because face coverings that are handled incorrectly or are moved around can present a greater risk than no covering.

Q. Are universities open at Alert Level 2?

Yes, at Alert Level 2, tertiary education providers can open with additional health measures in place.

Q: Can I return home from university halls?

Students can move within Alert Level 2 regions.

Students cannot move out of their accommodation if it is in an Alert Level 4 area. This includes moving to an Alert Level 2 area or returning to their primary home in an Alert Level 4 area.

Students are strongly discouraged from moving into or returning to student accommodation at Alert Level 4, unless it is an emergency.

Housing

More information can be found at the [Unite Against COVID-19 website](#).

Can I move house at Alert Level 2?

At Alert Level 2 you can move house, unless the house is within Alert Level 4. Travel remains restricted into Alert Level 4.

Can I buy or sell a home at Alert Level 2?

You can buy or sell a property at Alert Level 2. Open homes and auctions can take place in person, or remotely.

You cannot travel to an Alert Level 4 region to view a property.

Can property inspection and maintenance work be done at Alert Level 2?

You can have a tradesperson come to your house to do maintenance. This includes electricians, plumbers and builders.

Tradespeople and other workers do not need to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) when they come into your house, but they need to keep 2 metres away at all times. We recommend you move to a different room while they are working.

Do not invite people to your home for maintenance if you are anyone in your household is unwell.

If you are a landlord, you can carry out any property inspections. You can also do virtual inspections if the tenant agrees.

Gatherings

Q. Are gatherings like funerals or weddings allowed?

The virus changed with Delta, and so that means we need to adjust too.

Up to 50 people will be able to attend indoor gatherings and events, and 100 people for outdoor gatherings and events.

In Alert Level 2 tangihanga and funerals are to be kept at 50 people or less indoors, 100 people outdoors.

Organisers must collect everyone's details for contact tracing and maintain 2-metre distancing where possible.

Larger formal tangihanga/funerals can be held safely once we return to Alert Level 1.

Q. Are gatherings like church services and other religious ceremonies allowed?

The virus changed with Delta, and so that means we need to adjust too.

Up to 50 people will be able to attend indoor gatherings and events, and 100 people for outdoor gatherings and events.

For religious ceremonies this includes things like taking extra caution around singing and communion.

Keep a record of who attends, for contact tracing purposes if needed.

Q. Can I have people over to my home, for a party, BBQ or pot-luck?

Up to 50 people are able to attend any indoor gathering or event.

Keep a record of who attends for contact tracing purposes if needed.