

MidCentral DHB

# Well communities



These are unprecedented times as we are all being asked to stay at home and stop interactions with others outside of our household “bubble”. Please be assured that health services are still operating (although some things are being done differently) and for any medical emergencies, please still call 111.

## Take care of yourself as we deal with Covid-19

### Staying physically active is important

While in self-isolation you may go for a walk and enjoy nature in your local neighbourhood. Walking is a great way to maintain your general fitness. Take a cell phone or tell someone in your bubble when you are due back. Avoid other people when out walking and keep a 2-metre distance from people at all times.

If you are staying at home, one great way to get some exercise is doing ‘sit to stands’. When watching TV, every ad break try to stand up from your chair and sit back down slowly. Repeat five times. If you are able to, try not to use your hands to push off with.

If you would like a list of other seated and standing exercises that are safe for older people to do at home then please email: [Planning4health@midcentraldhb.govt.nz](mailto:Planning4health@midcentraldhb.govt.nz).

### Staying mentally healthy

Your emotional and mental wellbeing is important. It is normal to feel stressed or lonely when self-isolating, but there are some things you can do to feel better.

Reach out to your usual support people over the phone or online – family and whānau and friends. Sharing how we feel and offering support to others is important.

We also recommend sticking to a routine, such as having regular mealtimes, bedtimes and exercising.

The Mental Health Foundation's new ‘Getting Through Together’ campaign also has tips, ideas and resources to help us all through this tricky time. You can see it here: <https://www.allright.org.nz/>

If you feel you are not coping, it is important to talk with a health professional. For support with grief, anxiety, distress or mental wellbeing, you can **call or text 1737** – free, anytime, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week – to talk with a trained counsellor.

Be kind and take care.

## Kāpiti Coast District Council Welfare Support Helpline

If you don't have the essentials you need to get through lockdown (such as food, medication or cleaning supplies), in the first instance please try calling a:

- neighbour
- family member who lives nearby
- friend who lives nearby
- You could also check the availability for shopping online.

If these options are not available to you, then please call the Council welfare support helpline on **0800 486 486**. This call centre is available between 7.00am–7.00pm, seven days a week.

## Health Services for Ōtaki Residents

### Testing for Covid-19

There are five designated testing sites across the MidCentral District to provide assessment and swabbing for suspected cases of COVID-19. One of these sites is in Ōtaki. There is also a mobile testing unit available to support people who cannot access the testing sites.

Access to the testing COVID-19 testing service is by referral only. If you are feeling unwell, there are two ways to be referred to a testing site:

- Call the dedicated COVID-19 Healthline number on: **0800 358 5453**
- contact your GP by phone. General Practice Teams will be able to refer patients to these sites, if required.

### Ōtaki Medical Centre

Our General Practice staff are crucial to our national response to COVID-19 and are committed to keeping you well. Ōtaki Medical Centre will continue to operate as an essential service. Below are details of how their services are changing to look after your health and the health of your whānau.

#### Face-to-face consultations

Ōtaki Medical Centre is still open to see people face-to-face but please do not visit without calling first. When you call, your GP or nurse practitioner will advise you whether you need to visit them in person. Please listen to their instructions about what to do. You may be greeted at the door and asked questions before coming into the practice – or you may be asked to go to a different entrance rather than the one you usually go to.

Your GP and Nurse Practitioner will be doing fewer face-to-face consultations. Instead they may offer different 'non-contact' options, such as telephone or video consultations. There may be charges for phone, video and email consultation services. The practice will share this information with you – however if you are unsure, please do ask.

## **Community Pharmacy Services**

Our Community Pharmacy teams are also committed to keeping you well. Community Pharmacies will continue to work as essential services during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Community Pharmacies will be available for essential services only. This includes providing prescriptions, other medicines and advice. Pharmacies will not be available for casual shopping.

### **Going to your pharmacy in person**

From now on, Community Pharmacies will have a limited entry policy. When arriving at a pharmacy, people will be asked basic health questions before entering the premises. If unwell, you will be asked to wait in your car or outside.

People will not be permitted to wait inside for prescriptions. If waiting outside, please do not congregate with other people. Please keep social distancing of two metres at all times.

If you are unwell, please do not come into the Pharmacy. Ask a healthy person to pick up your prescription. They may need to bring ID and could be asked some questions by the pharmacy team.

### **Getting your prescription filled**

There may be a 24-hour delay for pharmacies to complete *non-urgent* prescriptions. Your pharmacy may ask you to return at a specific time or contact you when the medicine is ready. Please continue to order your repeat scripts as usual. Please do not order repeat prescriptions early.

### **Delivery options**

If you are unable to come to a pharmacy AND you do not have someone who can pick up your prescription, you will still be able to get your medicines. Please ask the pharmacy about their delivery options.

### **MedLab Temporarily Closed**

The Ōtaki MedLab is currently closed. Please be assured that this is only a temporary closure and normal services will resume at the conclusion of the Covid-19 response.

Ōtaki residents requiring blood tests are being asked to go to the MedLab in Levin. If you are unable to get to the MedLab in Levin please contact Ōtaki Medical Centre to arrange for your sample to be collected there.

### **Te Ara Rau Primary Mental Health Service**

In response to the COVID-19 situation, THINK Hauora Te Ara Rau (Primary Mental Health Service) are not currently seeing people face to face. All Mātanga Whai Ora/staff are conducting appointments either via phone or video.

Referrals to THINK Hauora Te Ara Rau must be through your GP and are limited.

People wanting mental health support are encouraged to call or text 1737.

Other useful resources are:

- Real-time Resilience Strategies - [https://nziwr.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/NZIWR\\_Real-time\\_Resilience\\_Coping\\_with\\_Coronavirus.pdf](https://nziwr.co.nz/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/NZIWR_Real-time_Resilience_Coping_with_Coronavirus.pdf)
- Te Puawaitanga on <https://www.homecaremedical.co.nz/telehealth-services>
- Just A Thought on <https://www.justathought.co.nz/>
- Lifeline also provide 24/7 support from trained counsellors and volunteers. Call 0800 543 354 or free text "help" to 4357
- <https://youthline.co.nz/counselling/html> offer many different ways to communicate! phone, text, skype, email etc.
- <https://thelowdown.co.nz/>

*If after using any of these resources a referral is still required, it is important to understand that there may be longer than usual waiting times for a phone or video contact.*

### **MidCentral DHB Hospital Services**

Some changes to hospital services have been put in place because of COVID-19. Many appointments are now being done via phone or video consult (where appropriate) to minimise the need for people to travel to the hospital and some non-urgent appointments have been postponed. If you have an upcoming appointment or elective surgery at any MidCentral DHB facility, and you're not sure if you should attend, please call our dedicated phonenumber 0800 256 963 to check. Note: this number is operational between 8am and 5pm Monday to Friday.

If you have any symptoms of COVID-19, including cough, fever or shortness of breath, then please do not attend or visit us.

It's important that we keep our patients and staff safe and we really appreciate your help with this. If you think you may have COVID-19, please call Healthline on 0800 358 5453.

### **Visiting patients in the hospital**

While in COVID-19 Alert Level Four, we are implementing a stricter policy regarding visitors to Palmerston North Hospital and the Horowhenua Health Centre.

To keep patients, whānau and staff safe, members of the public will be unable to visit patients at MDHB sites.

In some cases, exceptions to this policy will be made on essential and compassionate grounds - for example a parent/guardian who is supporting a child, a support person for a birthing mother or a nominated person supporting a terminal patient.

The decision will be made by an appropriate clinician and the visitor will need to undergo screening before they enter.

## **Temporary closure of Horowhenua Maternity Unit**

MidCentral District Health Board has made the difficult decision to close the Horowhenua Maternity Unit from 7am on 6 April 2020 until further notice.

Options for location of primary birth include your home or Te Papaioea Birthing Centre in Palmerston North. If your pregnancy is more complicated you will need to birth in Palmerston North Hospital. Our midwifery workforce is already under pressure, and it's likely this will be impacted even further by COVID-19. For this reason, we feel it is essential to consolidate our midwifery staff over two facilities, rather than three, during this time. This will ensure we can maintain safety for all of our mums and babies.

We know this is a really stressful time for expecting mothers and your whānau but we are confident that wherever you give birth you will be provided with the best care possible from our dedicated teams. Please speak to your Lead Maternity Carer if you need more information.

## **Shuttle services**

Health Shuttle services which usually operate to support patient travel from Otaki to Palmerston North Hospital are currently unable to continue due to a lack of driver capacity, as many volunteer drivers are in the vulnerable population groups. The DHB is working with Horowhenua Health Shuttle Service and St John's to sustain services. We have been working to recruit additional volunteer drivers and we are grateful to have on loan the shuttle vans from Horowhenua and St John's to continue providing this vital transport service to our communities. While establishing the service we have sustained patient travel through a paid taxi service.

We encourage anybody who still needs to travel to hospital for critical health procedures/appointments to arrange somebody within their household "bubble" to drive them where possible. This is the safest way to travel and helps us continue to break the chain and reduce unnecessary person-to-person contact. If you live alone, or have no vehicle or family that can provide transport for you, then please call Palmerston North Hospital at least a week before your appointment and ask to be put through to the Patient Travel Service, who will endeavor to help make arrangements for you.

## **Changes to Home and Community Support Services in response to COVID-19**

The way Home and Community Support Services (HCSS) are provided in the MidCentral District has had to undergo some changes in response to COVID-19. These are the services provided by support workers in homes, and may include helping with showering and dressing, medication oversight, and domestic assistance (e.g. cleaning).

MidCentral Health DHB has asked our HSCC providers to prioritise services in order to care for our most vulnerable people. This means some services will be limited to allow support to be redirected to those who need it most. Please be assured that our providers will carefully monitor anyone who may be put at risk because of any changes. The health and wellbeing of our clients and the community are our top priorities and MidCentral DHB and providers will endeavour to do welfare checks via phone for any clients whose services may have been put on hold. If you have any questions or concerns, particularly if you feel you or someone you know will be put at risk if services change, please contact the service provider.