



**12 August, 2020**

**COVID-19 advice for cancer patients, their whānau, household members and supporters/kai manaaki.**

Kia ora e te whānau,

We understand you and your whānau may feel unsettled by the news we have COVID-19 cases, with an unknown source.

Changes to our alert levels across the motu can make the waka feel a bit unsteady.

It is OK to be worried, but please know that cancer treatment and services are prepared and will continue delivering essential cancer services.

This is a comprehensive resource to help you navigate your cancer journey during this pandemic.

This resource includes advice for the following:

- 1 - What is COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and WHY is it so serious
- 2 - What are the symptoms
- 3 - Ngā tikanga haumaruru - how to keep everyone well at this time
- 4 - What does COVID-19 response Level 3 and 2 mean for your cancer care?
- 5 - The flu vaccination

6 - What to do if you feel unwell with flu symptoms

7 - What to do if you feel unwell with other symptoms

8 - What to do if you have cancer and someone in your whare is unwell

9 - What to do if you need to go out

10 - Looking after your wairua and hinengaro

## **1. What is COVID-19 (CORONAVIRUS) and WHY is it so serious?**

COVID-19 is a new virus that belongs to the coronavirus whānau. COVID-19 is serious because our body and immune system have never been exposed to it before. For most whānau, their body and immune system will be able to cope. But for some, infection with the COVID-19 virus could cause a severe illness. If your body's immune system has been weakened by cancer or cancer treatment (current and past) the risk of you having a serious infection is higher. It is important for whānau living with cancer to take extra care to stay well and prevent getting infected with COVID-19.

## **2. What are the symptoms?**

Symptoms can range from having none at all, to having a cough, high temperature, shortness of breath and body aches. People don't know if they have the virus until they get symptoms and/or get tested.

The symptoms of COVID-19 are:

- **Fever** - You may feel flushed and hot, or get hot and cold sweats (If you are taking your temperature at home, a fever is over 37.6 degrees celsius)
- **Coughing**
- **Shortness of breath**

- **Feeling tired, sore muscles or sore throat**

If you or a whānau member have symptoms or think you could have been exposed to the virus phone your doctor, the healthline team on 0800-358-5453 or your healthcare provider.

If you are experiencing symptoms and have a scheduled treatment appointment - call ahead and let them know. You will be advised of what action to take at that point.

### **3. Ngā tikanga haumarū - how to keep everyone well**

Staying home, keeping a safe distance from others, washing your hands regularly and no hongī, kīhi and awhi will be more important than ever.

It is also important to remember that you don't always know if you have the virus. Whānau can feel well and still be spreading the virus. That is why it is important for everyone in your whare to follow these 4 basic steps of infection prevention.

1) **Wash hands with soap for 20 seconds** and then dry hands thoroughly. Repeat often,

- especially before eating or handling kai
- after using the wharepaku
- after touching your face, mouth or nose
- after coughing or sneezing
- after blowing your nose
- after wiping children's noses
- after caring for sick people.
- when returning to the whare if you have been outside.

2) **Please don't touch** your eyes, nose or mouth

3) **Keep at least 2 metres away from other people.** This is going to feel really abnormal and unnatural. Please remember this is one of the key ways to stop infection spread in your whānau and it will not be this way forever.

- 4) **Clean and disinfect** frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as doorknobs, rails and phones and don't share towels, hand towels, cutlery and cups.

## **4. What does COVID-19 response Level 3 and 2 mean for your cancer care?**

### **Hospital appointments:**

Cancer care centres and hospitals are working hard to try and get services back up and running. This includes resuming appointments and some treatments whilst also trying to keep you safe and out of contact with COVID-19. Some appointments will continue to be over the phone or online and some will be face to face.

- Your cancer care team will contact you to let you know when and where your appointments are
- If you are being supported by kaiawhina or community providers keep them updated with any changes to your appointments or treatments.
- if you have any difficulties with transport or accommodation ask your cancer care team if there is support available

### **Medications:**

- Carry on taking your cancer medicines. Your cancer care team will talk with you about any changes to your treatment plan.
- Your specialist can fax or scan a prescription for medication to a pharmacy and you can pick it up from there.

### **Blood tests:**

There may be changes to where and how you get your blood tests

- Ask your cancer care team where to go for blood tests.
- Your cancer care team will let you know if you can have less blood tests.

## **5. The Flu vaccination:**

Please get your flu vaccination. This will not prevent you from getting COVID-19 but it will prevent you from getting the flu which is an important step for staying well.

- If you have cancer you get the flu vaccination for free.
- Whānau and anyone else who lives in your whare should get the flu vaccination too.

## **Where do you go for the flu vaccination?**

- No matter what alert level we are at you are still able to go and get your flu vaccination. Call your GP, pharmacy, or health centre who will advise you. If you are being supported by kaiawhina they may be able to support you.

## **6. What to do if you have cancer or a low immune system and feel unwell with flu symptoms**

If you have a temperature, cough, breathlessness or difficulty breathing

- Call your cancer care team, your GP or Healthline.
- PLEASE do not go straight to your GP or hospital - RING FIRST.

## **7. What to do if you have cancer and feel unwell with other symptoms**

- You may still become unwell with an illness that is not related to Coronavirus.
- Call your cancer care team, your GP or Healthline.

- Call 111 if you are experiencing chest pain, abdominal (puku) pain, severe or abnormal bleeding or stroke symptoms.

## **8. What to do if you have cancer and someone in your whare is unwell**

If someone else in your whare is unwell keep yourself safe by doing these things:

- If members of your household become unwell with a cough, fever or breathlessness ring your cancer care team or the healthline as soon as possible. They will advise you what to do next.
- In the meantime the sick person should stay isolated away from the main living areas to limit the possibility of infecting others in the household
- if others in your whare want to clean your room, ask them to wear a mask, and gloves and wash their hands for 20 seconds before and afterwards.
- Carry on following the **4 basic infection prevention steps above.**

## **9. What to do if you need to go out of the whare**

Staying at home as much as possible is best. However if you need to leave your whare for work, to go to the supermarket, service station or pharmacy and no one else can do this for you, to keep yourself safe, you should:

- Wear a mask
- Wash your hands before you go
- Keep a safe distance (at least 2 metres) from others at all times
- Avoid touching surfaces and your face while you are out.
- Use sanitiser and wash hands if possible while you are out and then wash your hands when you get home

## **10. Tiaki wairua, Tiaki hinengaro**

Whilst staying at home is best for you, we also know that this can sometimes cause anxiety or stress. Caring for your wairua and hinengaro will be important going forward. If your mauri is low and you feel anxious, stressed out and need someone else to talk to free call or text 1737 which is available 24 hours a day.

Other tips for maintaining mauri ora are listening to or composing waiata, having regular karakia, skyping and keeping in touch with whānau, journalling, doing mahi toi or raranga.

Hei Āhuru Mōwai is committed to providing Māori cancer leadership in Aotearoa and we hope you have found this information useful. Should there be any further changes we will update everyone accordingly.

For any further general advice please go to: [www.heiahurumowai.org.nz](http://www.heiahurumowai.org.nz) or <https://covid19.govt.nz>