
Targeted protections for disabled people – post-peak management of Omicron



The Government has continuously supported disabled people throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. While the arrival and spread of Omicron was inevitable, we've continued to move swiftly to protect the hauora of disabled and immunocompromised people.

High vaccination rates among disabled people has added an important layer of protection for the community.

Efforts have been made to ensure the Government's vaccination programme is accessible and inclusive, and as at 1 March 2022:

- 93% of disabled people had at least one dose, 92% of disabled people had two or more doses, and 66% had three or more doses.
- A higher proportion of disabled 5-11-year-olds are also estimated to be vaccinated compared to non-disabled children. 54% of disabled children have had at least one dose of the vaccine.

With good levels of boosters, higher levels of population immunity and the continued use of tools to support disabled people, our focus now is to make life simpler and closer to normal. Vaccine mandates remain in place for health and disability workers, and we will continue to support disabled and immunocompromised New Zealanders through the next stage in our COVID-19 response by:

Making RATs more accessible for disabled people:

- Disability providers can now order RATs and distribute them to the disabled people they support.
- People on DSS Individualised Funding who are not able to leave home can have RATs delivered by contacting their IF host. RATs will also be proactively provided to residential care services
- Home delivery option will be offered from Thursday 24 March 2022. Requests are triaged through the 0800 number.

Ongoing monitoring of supervised testing:

- Testing sites such as GP practices are offering supervised RATs and PCR tests for disabled people that need them, such as our blind or vision-impaired community.
- A system has been stood up for supervised testing in the home for people who need supervised RATs and PCR tests.
- Accessible information about how to access and use the RATs is available on the Unite Against COVID website.
- We will be providing supervised RATs, with an in home option if required. This to support disabled people with who cannot leave the home and are unable to do the test by themselves.

Disability Healthline (Whakarongorau):

- Disabled people have a dedicated Healthline, Whakarongorau Aotearoa that is staffed by disabled people to provide them with advice and support.
- The Whakarongorau team have support from the senior clinical team if they have concerns or queries regarding a caller's health.

Since the beginning of this outbreak, Government has supported disabled New Zealanders by:

- Setting up a new team to support disabled people to access transport and get vaccinated in a way that suits their needs.
- 'The Manaakitanga Journey' way-finding tool to support disabled peoples vaccination experiences.
- A text service to make it easier for the deaf, hard of hearing community and others who may be speech impaired to get vaccinated.
- Renewed efforts to consolidate and adapt the Unite Against COVID-19 website to ensure it's responsive, accessible and providing the necessary support that disabled people expect from it.