**Key messages for summer/rāumati 2023/2024**

**1.12.23**

**1.0 Have a good summer**

* *Go Well* and enjoy summer this year by being prepared and knowing how to stay healthy and safe.
* Most people who get sick will have minor symptoms and will be able to recover at home, or where they are staying.
* Keep up to date with all medications, immunisations, and necessary health appointments, (e.g., screenings, diabetes checks) over the holidays.
* If needed, ask for advice by contacting a doctor, healthcare provider or pharmacist, or for free medical advice 24/7, 365 days a year call Healthline on 0800 611 116. Interpreter support is available. Save this number on your phone.
* For accessible online health information and self-help resources, go to: [www.healthify.nz](https://healthify.nz/)

**2.0 COVID-19 is still a risk this summer**

2.1 COVID-19 immunisation and boosters

* COVID-19 is still in our communities and is a significant risk.
* Protect yourself, your whānau, and your community by getting immunised.
* Additional COVID-19 boosters are available for everyone aged 30 and over, and those aged 16-29 who are pregnant or at higher risk of severe illness.
* People who are most likely to benefit from another COVID-19 booster in late 2023 include:
  + Anyone aged 75 and older
  + Māori and Pacific people aged 65 and older
  + People aged 30 to 74 with significant complex health needs
  + People aged 16 and older who are severely immunocompromised
  + You need to wait six months between doses, and it’s recommended that you wait six months after your last COVID-19 infection.

2.2 If you get COVID-19 this summer

You or someone you’re travelling with could get COVID-19 while on holiday.

* If you test positive for COVID-19, here’s what to do:
  + Monitor and manage your symptoms: people with COVID-19, especially if they are fully immunised and boosted, are likely to have a mild to moderate illness and can recover at home. Symptoms for COVID-19 tend to show 2 to 5 days after a person has been infected.
  + It is recommended you isolate for at least 5 days, even if you only have mild symptoms, starting at Day 0, the day your symptoms started or when you tested positive, whichever came first. This includes if you have had COVID-19 before.
  + If you have taken a rapid antigen test (RAT), report your positive result online or by calling the helpline.
    - Online: My Covid Record
    - Call: 0800 222 478
    - It’s a good idea to have a plan for how you can look after yourself during your isolation period as well as keep others safe, especially if you are isolating at a place away from home.
    - For more information on COVID-19 please visit: [info.health.nz](https://info.health.nz/conditions-treatments/covid-19/)
  + You should wear a mask whenever you leave the house during your recommended 5-day isolation - it is very important you take precautions to prevent spreading COVID-19 to others.
  + You should not visit a healthcare facility (except to access medical care), or an aged residential care facility, or have contact with anyone at risk of getting seriously unwell with COVID-19.
  + If you have COVID-19 and need to go to a medical facility for care, then you should wear a mask to protect others. Please ring ahead to tell the facility you are coming, if possible.
  + Some people can still be infectious after 5 days. If you are still unwell after you have completed 5 days of isolation, it is recommended that you continue to stay home until you are recovered.
* If you are a household contact of someone with COVID-19, you do not need to isolate, however, we recommend you do a RAT each day for 5 days.
* Call 0800 358 54 53 for free COVID-19 health advice, any time, any day, even on Christmas Day. Interpreter support is available.
* A dedicated COVID-19 disability helpline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call free on 0800 11 12 13 or text 8988 for help or information about vaccines, testing and managing COVID-19 at home. Access this helpline using the NZ Relay Service for assistance (more information at [www.nzrelay.co.nz](http://www.nzrelay.co.nz)).
* If you do need to go to a medical care facility as a visitor, you may be asked to wear a face mask to protect those at higher risk, for example intensive care or ED patients, or seniors in Residential Care. To protect those at higher risk, please respect and follow the healthcare facility’s policies.

2.3 Make sure you have a supply of RATs

* Get ready now and make sure you have enough RATs to test everyone in your whānau over the holidays, if you need to. Pack some in your travel bags before you head away.
* Free RATs remain available for pick up from participating RAT collection centres until 29 February 2024. To find a collection centre near you, visit www.h[ealthpoint](https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/covid-19/?covidTesting=im%3A1374240).co.nz or call free on 0800 222 478 and choose option 1. Make sure to check location opening hours, which may differ over summer.
* If you live rurally, have a disability, are immunocompromised or experience challenges collecting RATs yourself, you can call 0800 222 478 to check if you are eligible for a RAT delivery service.
* If you have COVID-19 symptoms and need to visit your healthcare provider for an in-person appointment, please complete a RAT first.

2.4 Antiviral medicines

* Find out if you are eligible for free antiviral medicines to treat COVID-19.
* COVID-19 antiviral medicines can help people who are at risk of becoming very sick with COVID-19. These medicines are free for anyone who is eligible.
* You must start taking them within 5 days of becoming unwell. Find out more about eligibility and more information on COVID-19 antiviral medicines at: [info.health.nz](https://info.health.nz/conditions-treatments/covid-19/antiviral-medicines/)
* You can also talk to your doctor, pharmacist or hauora provider if you think that you, or a member of your whānau, may be eligible for antiviral medicines.

**3.0 Plan ahead**

3.1 If you are travelling

* Before you travel, contact your doctor, nurse, healthcare provider or pharmacy for any health needs and make sure you have enough prescription medication, RATs, and masks, for the duration of your travelling.
* Pharmacies outside main centres may not carry some medicines, or have limited stock, so it is best to take what you need with you.
* Remember, opening hours for your doctor’s clinic and local pharmacy might change over the summer period, so get in touch early.
* Check you have everything you need to stay well, especially if you’re travelling into remote or rural areas where there won’t be as many health services.
* Your local doctor may be able to register you with their patient portal so you can book online appointments, order repeat prescriptions, and see your health records online when you are on holiday.
* Pack a first aid kit, with a thermometer and supply of paracetamol or ibuprofen, and some over the counter medications for cough and cold symptoms. With COVID-19 still circulating in our communities, it is also a good idea to pack some RATs, hand sanitiser and face masks in case you need them.
* Preparing for international travel:
  + Make sure you have enough medication for the whole trip.
  + If you’re travelling overseas, talk to your healthcare provider about recommended or required immunisations for the areas where you are travelling. Some countries have disease outbreaks such as measles, polio, hepatitis and typhoid and others. Tetanus shots after injury can be harder to get if you are travelling so it is important to get this before you go if you are not up to date. It takes a few weeks for vaccinations to take effect, so do this 6-8 weeks before you leave.
  + It’s a good idea to protect yourself from COVID-19 while overseas – pack a kit that has RATs, hand sanitiser and masks, and have a plan if you need to isolate.

3.2 Keep up to date with immunisations

Immunisations for pregnant people

* If you’re pregnant, it’s important to get your free whooping cough and flu immunisations this Summer.
* Getting these immunisations every time you are pregnant will protect you and your pēpi from getting seriously unwell.
* Influenza and whooping cough can be caught at any time of the year. If you weren’t immunised against flu this winter and have since become pregnant, getting immunised will help protect you and your pēpi.
* By getting immunised when you’re pregnant, you’ll protect your pēpi until they can have their first immunisations when 6 weeks old because your immunity passes to your baby through the placenta.
* Babies are much less likely to need hospital care if they catch flu or whooping cough when their mother has been immunised.
* People who are pregnant are much less likely to get severely unwell from flu if they have been immunised.
* The whooping cough vaccine is most effective when given from 16 to 26 weeks of pregnancy but is available and free from 13 weeks of every pregnancy.
* If you’re planning a pregnancy, it’s recommended that you’re up to date with other immunisations such as MMR (measles, mumps, rubella) and chickenpox, as these infections can cause serious harm to your unborn baby. You can’t have these immunisations when you’re pregnant.
* Talk to your midwife or healthcare provider for more information about immunisation during pregnancy, or visit [Immunise.health.nz/immunisation-during-pregnancy](https://www.immunise.health.nz/immunisation-during-pregnancy) *[Note: Ii*mmunise is a zero-data website and can be accessed from zero.govt.nz]

3.3 Masks

* It’s a good idea to always carry a face mask with you, especially if you are concerned about getting sick. Use one when you are in in closed, crowded, and confined spaces with poor airflow, and especially on public transport.
* It is recommended that you wear a mask when visiting healthcare services to protect those at higher risk of getting very sick such as older, immunocompromised, and disabled people.
* Some healthcare facilities and certain areas within healthcare facilities may ask visitors to wear a face mask. Please respect and follow healthcare facility policies.
* Free masks remain available for pick up with RATs from participating RAT collection sites until 29 February 2023. Find sites that provide masks on [Healthpoint](https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/covid-19/?covidTesting=&covidTesting=im%3A1374240) and make sure to check location opening hours, which may differ over summer.

**4.0 Protect yourself and others**

4.1 If unwell, stay at home or where you are on holiday

* If you are feeling sick stay at home, or wherever you are, whether with whānau or at your holiday accommodation. Don’t travel, attend, take part in, or host gatherings or activities.
* If you are unwell, stay away from people at higher risk of getting very sick, such as babies, older people, immunocompromised and disabled people.
* If you have cold, flu or COVID-19 symptoms, take a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) and if positive, report the result in [My COVID Record](https://mycovidrecord.health.nz/) so you can get the help and support you might need.
* If you test positive for COVID-19, we recommend you isolate for at least 5 days, even if you only have mild symptoms, starting at Day 0. Day 0 is the day your symptoms started or when you tested positive, whichever came first. This includes if you have had COVID-19 before.

4.2 Tips for when you’re out and about

* If you’re concerned about your risk of getting sick, consider limiting the time you spend in closed, crowded, or confined places, and think about wearing a well-fitting mask when you are around a lot of other people.
* We highly recommend you wear a mask when visiting healthcare services to protect those at higher risk of getting very sick.
* We encourage to you to take a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT), if you have cold or flu like symptoms, before you visit older people, disabled people or others who are at higher risk.

4.3 General health advice

* If you, or someone in your whānau, feels unwell, gets injured, or needs help or advice, you can talk to your local GP, Urgent Care Clinic, pharmacy or hauora provider, or call Healthline on 0800 611 116. Remember, in an emergency always call 111 or go directly to your local hospital emergency department. Find local healthcare services by visiting [Healthpoint](https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/).
* Keep up with the healthy habits that can help protect yourself and others from getting sick over summer:
  + Wash your hands often with warm soapy water for 20 seconds or use alcohol-based sanitiser. This is one of the easiest ways of keeping you and others safe.
  + Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your elbow and dispose of the tissue in a bin. Then wash or sanitise your hands.
  + Clean surfaces and objects regularly, especially those that are touched a lot.
  + Keep the air fresh and clean when you’re inside by opening windows and doors.
  + If unwell, don’t attend private and public events. If you need to go out, wear a well-fitting mask to help stop spreading germs to other people.

4.4 Look out for yourself and others

* Take your medication as it has been prescribed – especially any preventers, such as for asthma or allergies, that help stop flare ups and keep you well.
* Check in often on family, friends, and neighbours, particularly those who live alone, people who are not going away over summer or those who are at higher risk of getting very sick, such as older or disabled people.
* If you or someone you know is lonely or struggling, please go here to get advice: [Wellbeing resources | Find wellbeing support | Te Whatu Ora – Health NZ](https://www.wellbeingsupport.health.nz/wellbeing-resources/)
* Be Sunsmart; Slip, Slop, Slap and Wrap. Protect your skin and eyes from the sun’s damaging rays. Check the sun protection alert time where you are each day: <https://www.sunsmart.org.nz/resources/sun-protection-alert/>
* Food safety is always important, but especially in hot weather. Food Safety messages can be found here: [Food health and safety | New Zealand Government (www.govt.nz)](https://www.govt.nz/browse/health/food-safety/food-health-and-safety/)
* Be aware of water safety advice for swimming, fishing, boating and water sports. More can be found here: [Resources | Water Safety NZ](https://www.watersafetynz.org/resources)
* Each summer, popular swimming sites across the motu are tested for unsafe levels of bacteria or cyanobacteria (toxic algae). Exposure to these can be harmful.
  + When you’re heading for a swim at your favourite lake, river or beach this summer, don’t forget to look out for water quality information signs or visit ‘Can I Swim Here?’ section of the Land Water Aotearoa (LAWA) website at [www.lawa.org.nz](http://www.lawa.org.nz/) to view the latest information.
  + Swimmers are urged to avoid getting in the water within 48 hours of significant rainfall as heavy rain can wash contaminants into our waterways.
  + Before going out to collect kaimoana, please check whether the area you are gathering from is safe.

**5.0 What to do if you get sick or injured**

5.1 Seeking healthcare support and information over the holiday period

* If you get sick, for free medical advice 24/7, 365 days a year call Healthline on 0800 611 116 – interpreter support is available. If you’re not sure what to do or where you can get in-person health care at this time of year, Healthline can advise what services are open wherever you are in the country.
* If you or someone in your whānau needs to see a doctor, contact your local healthcare provider to arrange an appointment. Also contact or visit your local community pharmacy to ask for advice. Please bear in mind that their opening hours may differ from their normal hours over the Christmas holiday period. See [www.healthpoint.co.nz](http://www.healthpoint.co.nz) for details of services open across the motu over summer.
* For children/tamariki under 5, call Plunketline on 0800 933 922 for free health advice 24/7, 365 days a year.
* For a sports injury you can go straight to a physio or sports injury clinic. They can arrange x-rays and treatment, register an ACC claim, or refer you to a specialist.
* You can book a virtual on-line consultation with a GP with one of the providers based in NZ.
* In an emergency dial 111.
* If you are away from home, or an international traveller, you can contact a doctor or medical centre in the local area where you are staying but you may need to pay for advice and care.
* General online health information and self-help resources can be found at [www.healthify.nz](https://healthify.nz/)

5.2 Emergency care

* Te Whatu Ora hospitals across the motu will continue to provide critical and emergency care 24/7 as they have always done over the Christmas period.
* Hospital emergency departments and many urgent care clinics remain open – so if it’s an emergency, always call 111 or go to the emergency department if you are seriously unwell or if it’s a life-threatening emergency.

**6.0 Viruses, bugs, and illnesses to look out for over summer**

6.1 Measles

* Of all the diseases that could severely impact your summer, measles is one of the most dangerous and contagious.
* Measles spreads easily among people who are not immunised.
* Aotearoa is at a high risk of a measles outbreak. People are travelling more and there’s greater potential for it to arrive in New Zealand.
* The best protection against measles is two doses of the free MMR vaccine – this provides lifelong protection in 99% of people.
* The MMR vaccine is free for anyone aged 18 and under, and those over the age of 18 who are eligible for free healthcare in New Zealand

It usually takes 10-12 days from exposure to measles to the first symptom becoming obvious:

* The illness begins with fever, cough, runny nose, and conjunctivitis (inflammation in the eyes), which lasts for 2-4 days.
* It may be possible to see small white spots inside the mouth.
* A rash appears 2-4 days after the first symptoms, beginning at the hairline and gradually spreading down the body to the arms and legs. The rash lasts for up to one week.

As we head towards the holidays, we are encouraging you to:

* Check whether you are immunised against measles by:
  + Checking the vaccination page of your Wellchild or Plunket book (if vaccinated in New Zealand)
  + Checking your immunisation certificate
  + Looking at your online health record
  + Contacting your doctor, or your usual healthcare or hauora provider
* People are considered immune if they:
  + Received two doses of measles, mumps, rubella (MMR) vaccine,
  + Have had a measles illness previously, or
  + Lived in New Zealand before 1969
* A “Find out if I need a measles vaccine” decision tool is available [here.](https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.immunise.health.nz%2Fabout-vaccines%2Fnz-immunisations%2Fmeasles-mumps-and-rubella-mmr-vaccine%2Ffind-out-if-you-need-a-measles-vaccine%2F&data=05%7C01%7CJanise.Eketone%40waikatodhb.health.nz%7C74646e2405e94a70d39508dbd11fb958%7C40ee104132d44b368b4fc1d6fd035337%7C0%7C0%7C638333706411303131%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=%2FIVpwuc3bN7QOwe6VASGKbutDWlTonzg9kKuPbIO%2FHI%3D&reserved=0)
* Get immunised with the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) vaccine – click [here](https://www.immunise.health.nz/about-vaccines/nz-immunisations/measles-mumps-and-rubella-mmr-vaccine/)
* Find out where to get a measles vaccine by visiting [Healthpoint](https://www.healthpoint.co.nz/)

We are also reminding anyone who think they may have measles, to stay at home and call a healthcare provider or Healthline on 0800 611 116 for more advice.

6.2 Be on your guard against gastro

* Gastroenteritis (gastro/tummy bug) is highly infectious, and large numbers of people can be affected in a short amount of time. Main symptoms are diarrhoea (runny poo) and vomiting (being sick). Bugs such as norovirus, rotavirus, salmonella, campylobacter, and cryptosporidium can all cause gastro symptoms.
* Gastro spreads very easily from person to person. This can happen by shaking hands with someone who has been sick and has virus particles on their hands, having contact with an infected person’s vomit or poo, by touching contaminated objects like shared items, door handles, or cutlery, and from eating contaminated food, drink, or water.
* When a person is sick with vomiting and/or diarrhoea, it can also cause dehydration when the body loses more fluid than it takes in. Children/tamariki are more likely to get seriously dehydrated with gastro as they can lose fluid more quickly. In some cases, this can lead to hospitalisation.
* People usually get Bacterial Gastroenteritis by eating or drinking food or water that is contaminated with the bacteria. This is less easily passed from person to person, but depending on the source, large numbers of people may become infected.
* To guard against gastro, it’s important to wash your hands with soap and water, and dry your hands thoroughly, especially:
  + before eating or preparing food
  + after going to the toilet
  + when changing nappies
  + after contact with an infected person
* If someone in your home, workplace or education facility has gastro, to prevent spread:
  + Ensure regular cleaning and disinfection of surfaces, rooms and affected areas, especially frequently touched surfaces or objects, and bathrooms and toilets.
  + Keep spaces well-ventilated by opening windows and doors several times a day to increase fresh air flow.
* Food safety is always important, but especially in hot weather. Food Safety messages can be found here: [Food health and safety | New Zealand Government (www.govt.nz):](https://www.govt.nz/browse/health/food-safety/food-health-and-safety/)Food health and safety | New Zealand Government (www.govt.nz):
  + Make sure you wash your hands before cooking
  + Keep food refrigerated properly where possible
  + Don’t leave food out for too long
  + Make sure meat and fish are properly cooked before eating
  + Keep surfaces and utensils clean
* If you’re concerned, contact your usual medical centre or hauora provider, or call Healthline on 0800 611 116.

**7.0 How to manage issues related to El Nino**

7.1 Managing heat - **STAY COOL & WELL THIS SUMMER**

* As temperatures rise, it’s important to look after yourself and your whānau this summer.
* Extreme heat can cause illness and death, but effective planning and actions can reduce its effects on health.
* We are all vulnerable to hot temperatures, some people are more at risk. This includes older people, babies and infants, people who are pregnant, those with pre-existing medical conditions or on certain medications, and people living alone.
* There are some simple steps that we can all take to reduce the risk to our health when the temperatures are high:
* Plan ahead - check the forecast, pack enough water and food, use a chiller bag
* Drink plenty of water and encourage your children to drink often
  + Stay out of the sun, find shade outside wherever possible and stay indoors when you can and wear loose and light cotton clothing
  + If you have to be outside, remember to Slip, Slop, Slap and Wrap. Slip on a shirt/top with long sleeves and a collar and slip into the shade, slop on sunscreen that is at least SPF 30, broad spectrum, and water resistant, and apply 20 minutes before going outside and reapply every two hours and slap on a wide brimmed hat and wrap on close-fitting sunglasses
  + Don’t leave children or pets unattended in parked cars
  + Keep a close eye on neighbours, especially the elderly, to check they’re okay. Remember, children, older people or those with health concerns may find it more difficult to cope with the heat
  + Keep your house cool by opening windows and doors on the shaded side and close curtains and blinds to keep the sun out
  + Keep cool while exercising. If possible, exercise or do outdoor activities early in the morning or later in the evening
  + Don’t forget to call Healthline on [0800 611 116](tel:0800611116) for free health advice.
* For further information about managing heat visit: [Heat Health Plans: Guidelines and key information](https://aus01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.tewhatuora.govt.nz%2Fpublications%2Fheat-health-plans-guidelines&data=05%7C01%7CJonathan.Tudor%40health.govt.nz%7Ca364604842e842c91c6508dbef96c481%7C23cec7246d204bd19fe9dc4447edd1fa%7C0%7C0%7C638367203063640082%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=gjLAP6JkgiDPIaKd5i75Tr9kb2wEDAFKfsw7nmUZJPw%3D&reserved=0)

7.2 Managing smoke from wildfires

* When wildfires occur there is potential for people who are sensitive to smoke to experience coughing, shortness of breath or eye, nose, and throat irritation.
* Look out for the people most affected including those with heart or lung conditions, pregnant women, young children, and the elderly, however, smoke in the air can be an irritant for anyone.
* Whenever possible, stay out of the smoke and stay indoors when it is practical and safe.
* Close all doors and windows to reduce smoke coming into your home.
* Seal gaps under doors or around windows and wall vents with towels, blankets, or plastic.
* When indoors:
  + Use air conditioners with HEPA filters; if the air conditioner has no filter, use it on recirculation mode only (turn off temperature modulation)
  + Avoid other sources of indoor air pollution (such as smoking, vaping, burning candles, using wood burners, or stirring up fine dust by sweeping or vacuuming).
* Consider bringing pets inside away from smoke or heat.
* When smoke outside clears up, open windows and doors to flush with fresh air, vacuum any ash and dust, and wash any homegrown fruit and vegetables before eating.
* If the air in your home is uncomfortable, consider going to an air-conditioned building like a library or shopping centre for a break if it is safe to do so.
* Do not exercise outdoors until the air is clear.
* For further information visit: [Response to wildfires – Guidelines for Public Health Officers](https://www.tewhatuora.govt.nz/publications/response-to-wildfires-guidelines-for-public-health-officers/)

7.3 Managing impacts of dust resulting from strong winds

1. Dust, especially that related to silt deposited after Cyclone Gabrielle, can be very irritating to the eyes and upper airways, and for those with underlying heart or lung conditions, like asthma, it can worsen symptoms.
2. Te Whatu Ora is currently working with NIWA and ESR to assess the public health impacts of dust generated from airborne silt in Hawke’s Bay. This is important to understand any potential for long-term health impacts related to reduced air quality.
3. Until there is conclusive data available to understand the long-term health impacts it is prudent for people to take precautions during times when dust is a significant issue in the communities they are living or working in. This is particularly important for the elderly, very young and people with respiratory or cardiovascular health conditions.
4. To reduce any impact:
   * When outside in dusty areas wear a well-fitting mask (N95/P2) and eye protection
   * Avoid exercising outside
   * Wash your hands and clothes after being in contact with large quantities of silt
   * When it’s very dusty due to high winds, stay indoors if possible and close windows
   * When cleaning up inside homes or cars, wipe surfaces or vacuum rather than sweep, which could “resuspend” dust