

Māori wellness checks encouraging uptake of health services

Māori patients are being encouraged to catch up on medical care they may have missed during the COVID-19 lockdown.

WellSouth nursing staff are making phone calls to Māori patients enrolled with GPs in the Southern district, checking on their health and well-being and offering influenza vaccinations.

Patients contacted are asked – How are you? How are your whānau? Do you have any health concerns? People contacted so far have appreciated the gesture.

“We want to ensure Māori access health services and we want to help general practice maintain connections with Māori communities,” says Peter Ellison, WellSouth Associate Māori Health Officer. “WellSouth has a commitment to achieving equitable health outcomes for Māori, and we’re working together with Iwi, hapū, whānau, Māori providers and communities.”

Gilbert Taurua, Chief Māori Health Strategy and Improvement Officer, says the COVID-19 lockdown may have prevented some people from accessing the health care they need.

“Māori are likely to face an increased burden of worsening outcomes from both COVID-19 and non-COVID-19 health conditions during lockdown. These wellness calls to Māori patients is our proactive strategy to reach out to this population and better understand their needs from a holistic perspective.”

Initially trialled in Dunedin, Māori wellness checks will be rolled out across the district.



Nurse Jenni Duncan and Peter Ellison, WellSouth Associate Māori Health Officer

The Southern Health system is at Alert Level 2

Symptoms for COVID-19 are:

- a fever (high temperature)
- a cough
- shortness of breath or trouble breathing
- a sore throat
- sneezing and a runny or dripping nose
- a temporary loss of sense of smell.



Wash your hands with soap and water often (for at least 20 seconds). Then dry.



Cough or sneeze into your elbow or by covering your mouth and nose with tissues.



Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as doorknobs.



Don't touch your eyes, nose or mouth if your hands are not clean.



Put used tissues in the bin or a bag immediately.



Stay home if you feel unwell.

Thank you to our community for your support during the various alert levels - we are now at Alert Level 2. As we unite against COVID 19, we want to reassure you that we are here to help. Health services are running as normal, although you may notice some changes to keep you safe. If it's an emergency, call 111.

Where to get advice and testing for COVID-19

People in the Southern district with cold and flu symptoms who were seeking a COVID-19 test should call 0800 VIRUS19 (0800 847 8719 – for people in Otago and Southland only) or their local GP for advice, and should stay at home.

If you are offered a test for COVID-19, please take it. It will help us ensure we don't have community transmission, and help keep your friends, family and whānau safe.

A COVID-19 test is free of charge.

Weekends

At the weekends, please call 0800 VIRUS19 (0800 847 8719).

Hospital visiting hours

Our hospital visiting hours remain unchanged at this stage but please do not visit our hospitals if you are unwell. With community transmission of COVID-19 in New Zealand we need to keep our patients and staff safe. If you have cold or flu symptoms please get a COVID-19 test.

Find up-to-date information on the socials:

- www.southernhealth.nz
- Unite Against COVID-19 Facebook and Instagram: @UniteAgainstCovid19
- Ministry of Health Facebook: @minhealthnz
- Southern DHB Facebook: @southerndhb



Derek McKinnel during his recovery at Wakari Hospital with his wife Helen

Less travel for cardiac patients

Southland man Derek McKinnel has been among the first to benefit from a procedure that's now possible in the Dunedin Hospital cardiology department. Patients can now be fitted with an Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator (ICDs) in Dunedin Hospital rather than having to travel to Christchurch for the procedure.

An ICD is a type of pacemaker that helps keep the heart beating at a steady rate and can reduce the risk of a person dying from dangerous heart rhythms.

"ICDs are implanted in patients for a number of clinical reasons," says Dr James Pemberton, Consultant Cardiologist whose successful application to the DHB's Clinical Practice Committee means the procedure can now be carried out.

"These are usually when there's a high risk that the patient's heart could stop

beating – a cardiac arrest. This may be because they've already had a cardiac arrest, or because their heart condition means they're at high risk of having one."

When Derek's heart stopped while he was driving, fortunately his wife was with him and CPR was started promptly. After spending three weeks in Southland Hospital with complications he was transferred to Dunedin Hospital and fitted with an ICD. He completed his recovery in the ISIS rehabilitation ward at Wakari Hospital.

Mr McKinnel's wife Helen says having the procedure in Dunedin made a huge difference. "It was brilliant news that the procedure could be done in Dunedin and we didn't have to go to Christchurch. It was really stressful with Derek being so unwell and I really don't think I could have coped with driving that far – it

would have been too traumatic. It was also lovely that I knew the doctor who was caring for Derek."

Dr Edmond, who performed the procedure, says it's great the cardiology department can now provide a full range of pacemaker implant procedures.

"This provides a better service for patients, it's more cost effective, staff have been able to upskill, and having the ability to fit ICDs is a positive factor for the future recruitment of new staff members to the team."

Local workers training at New Dunedin Hospital project office



Students don full asbestos removal gear in a simulated environment training exercise

Dunedin workers were given a three-day training course in asbestos removal at the New Dunedin Hospital project offices this recently.

Led by Fibresafe NZ, the local Tradestaff workers were given technical instruction, and were also taken to the former Cadbury factory to be given practical tutorials, as demolition crews continue to work on the 'soft strip' of the factory buildings.

This experience and the resulting qualification will be very important given the scope of work in the New Dunedin Hospital project reliant on the highly technical and safe removal of asbestos from some very old buildings.

This process of engagement and conducting targeted training, support, and opportunities for local workers will develop further with the New Dunedin Hospital project, especially as construction gets underway and a large workforce is required.

Board Update



Dave Cull, Chair

We were prepared for the possibility of COVID-19 reappearing in New Zealand, and indeed it has.

Last week we received the unwelcome news that cases had been found in the North Island, and the Southern district, along with most of New Zealand, was moved into Alert Level 2.

While this was not the news anyone wanted to hear, it has provided the opportunity to check our response to the possibility of a resurgence and once again I want to express my appreciation to everyone involved in this.

It is clear the plans that were developed and lessons learned during our previous experience with COVID-19 have placed the health system in a good position to prepare for further cases.

It has been heartening to see our contact tracing teams ready themselves for action, and hospital "surge" plans being poised for reactivation. Even better - this time, all hospital services are continuing to operate.

I especially wish to thank WellSouth PHO and general practices for their work in enabling a sharp increase in testing, and Southern Community Laboratories for processing all the results.

I also send our thoughts to our friends in Auckland who are living under greater restrictions as we work together to fight COVID-19.

Thank you again to our communities for taking the additional precautions required at Alert Level 2. Your efforts ultimately alleviate the burden on our health system, so on behalf of the health workers across the Southern district, we are truly grateful.

Kia kaha, Dave

REMINDER

Māori encouraged to return test kits

Southern DHB's National Bowel Screening Programme team are working to ensure Māori participation in the programme remains high, reminding Māori residents who are eligible for the programme to complete and return their test kits.

The National Bowel Screening Programme paused during the Covid-19 lockdown and people who had been sent kits were asked to hold on to them. The Programme is now back to operating normally but the team has noticed a slight decline in the number of tests being returned by Southern Māori. The Ministry of Health has written to people to let them know that they should now return their tests.

Currently, Māori participation in the Southern district sits at 75%, compared with 73% overall. Both figures exceed the national target of 60%.