



Southern DHB staff attend an educational session with DHB Disability Working Group Chairperson John Marrable (centre) as part of Accessibility Week

Accessibility Week promotes disability awareness, challenges stereotypes

Southern DHB marked the International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD) on Friday 3 December by recently hosting an Accessibility Week – celebrating contributions and achievements of people with disabilities, challenging stereotypes, removing barriers and promoting inclusivity within the workplace.

Dunedin, Southland and Lakes District Hospital promoted Accessibility Week, featuring interactive displays, braille sessions with 'That Blind Woman' Julie Woods, and an education session with Southern DHB Disability Working Group Chairperson John Marrable.

"By acknowledging this important day, we can take action to remove barriers for the 1.1 million New Zealanders with a disability and contribute to positive change in our workplace and the Southern community," says Mr Marrable.

"We are just like everyone else and want to be treated with the same dignity."

Along with foyer displays and educational sessions, one of the key focusses of Accessibility Week was ableism - the discrimination of disabled people based on the belief that able-bodied people are superior.

"Disability is not something individuals have, but it's created by the barriers that are put before us,"

says 'That Blind Woman' Julie Woods.

"Accessibility Week is so important because it provides us the opportunity to put the spotlight on the 24% of the New Zealand population who live with a disability. It also allows the able-bodied community a chance to see what is possible for people with disabilities."

Keeping safe over summer

Summer is here and we all want to stay safe and enjoy it. Here are some reminders to help us stay vigilant and minimise the spread of COVID-19 during the holiday period.

- **Wear a mask or face covering when out and about**
- **Scan everywhere you go, or manually update your diary in the COVID Tracer app or paper copy.** This is especially important when on holiday because later you may not remember all the locations you have visited or the people you have seen
- **Have your vaccine pass ready, either on your phone or a paper copy.** It will be needed to enter places that require proof of vaccination. A paper copy of your My Vaccine Pass is a useful back-up to keep with you, in case you lose your phone, or it has run out of battery
- **Get tested - testing services will remain available over summer.** If you need to get a test, call Healthline (0800 358 5453) or check the Healthpoint website for details of the nearest testing service and find out when they are open
- **Be prepared.** Have backup plans should the COVID Protection Framework setting change
- **Continue to maintain good hygiene practices.**

If you become unwell or have been exposed to a COVID-19 positive case whilst in your home region:

- Stay at home, do not travel or take part in events or activities if you are sick
- Call 0800 VIRUS-19 (0800 847 8719) for advice and to arrange to get tested

If you become unwell or have been exposed to a COVID-19 positive case while on holiday or away from home:

- Call 0800 VIRUS-19 (0800 847 8719) or check the Healthpoint website for details of local health professionals who can advise whether and where you should be tested
- If you are advised to get a test, please do so as soon as possible; **do not wait until you get home to get tested**
- If you are symptomatic, isolate until you receive your test result
- If you test positive for COVID-19 while on holiday, a health official will discuss your relevant circumstances and advise you as to what you should do. They will discuss your options and agree on a plan that reduces risk to others

- If you are unable to return home safely, you will be supported to isolate in accordance with the COVID-19 Care in the Community programme.



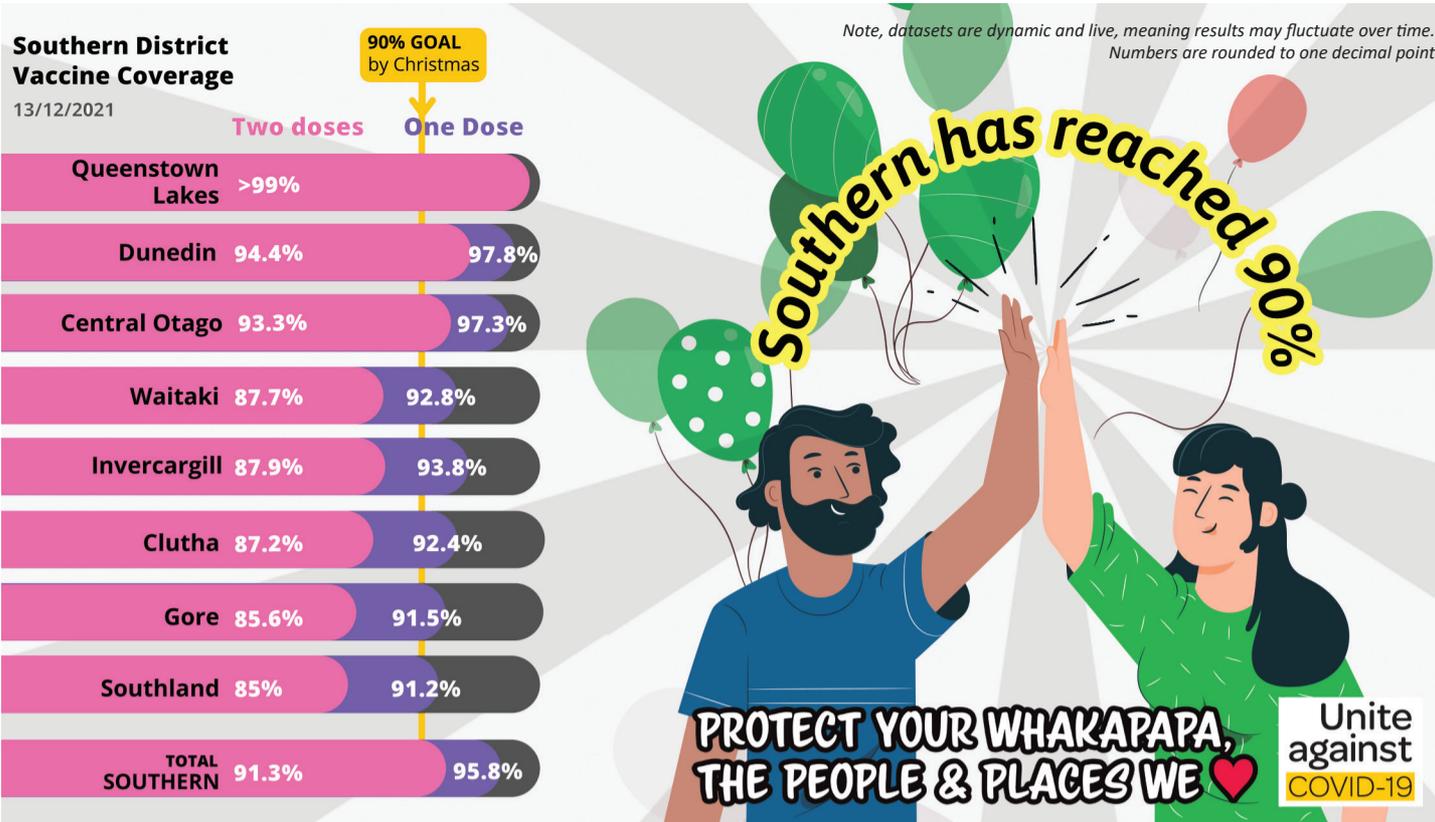
GOT SYMPTOMS? GET TESTED!

For COVID-19 testing in Southern, call:

0800 VIRUS 19

(0800 847 8719)





Pete Hodgson, Chair

Keeping up, catching up.

New Zealand's approach to managing COVID-19 has differed from most western countries. We have focussed on keeping our health system functional. We have not let it become overwhelmed. Stories of shortages of ICU beds, or even mortuary space, have been common place elsewhere in the world over the past 18 months. In that same period, New Zealand has reached 90% double vaccination rates while keeping our hospitals relatively functional and our COVID-19 death rate very low indeed.

Even so there has still been a price. Health staff have been diverted to treating those COVID-19 cases we have had, as well as to planning, training, vaccinating, tracking and tracing.

There have been consequent delays in hospital services – such as some diagnostic tests or surgery. Sometimes these have been caught up; sometimes not. When COVID-19 arrives south, as it will, some of those delays might well recur.

Less obviously, other vaccination rates are starting to drop a little because they no longer receive the special attention they need. For example progress on catching up on measles vaccination, of some teenagers who missed out years ago, has slowed.

Indeed we have a lot of vaccination activity in front of us. Measles, mumps, rubella and all the other scheduled vaccines need to be maintained. Then 6 – 11 year old COVID-19 vaccination starts from January, booster COVID-19 vaccination is being progressively rolled out for the rest of us, seasonal flu jabs for many of us are due in the Autumn, and we might also add whatever is needed when we better understand Omicron.

New Zealand has made astonishingly good progress with COVID-19 vaccination, and the efforts of the people of Otago and Southland are amongst the best. We have one of the highest protection levels in the world.

But the vaccination job isn't done yet.

Southern hits 90% vaccination rate

The Southern district achieved the 90% double vaccinated milestone last week, well ahead of the proposed Christmas timeframe.

Queenstown Lakes, Dunedin and Central Otago have also reached the 90% fully vaccinated milestone. Significantly, all of Southern's local authorities have now reached 90% first doses. This includes Clutha, Southland, Invercargill, Waitaki and Gore, and has been the result of very hard work by the community and local health providers over the last few weeks. These five areas are well on track to meet the 90% target before Christmas.

"This is a major achievement for the programme, providers, communities and the whole district,"

Southern DHB COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout Programme Lead Karl Metzler says.

"Thank you to the people of the district for doing your bit to keep yourselves and your community safe. We also give a huge thanks to our partners, vaccinators and administrators across the southern health system who are crucial in delivering vaccinations to our communities."

Southern's overall vaccination rate is very encouraging, but we must remember that while the district may be at 90%, there are still pockets with low levels of vaccinations, and it is these communities that are particularly at risk in a local outbreak.

Southern's Māori population is currently sitting ahead of national Māori vaccination rates, with 87% with a first dose, and 76% double vaccinated.

We are still seeing strong demand for first and second doses across the region, and we will continue working

hard to reach unvaccinated people to give them the best chance to protect themselves and their loved ones from Covid-19.

Mr Metzler says he understands that many of the people who have not yet received their vaccinations may be feeling anxious or have questions. He says there are safe spaces at vaccination clinics to talk with a trained clinician. You can also talk to staff at your local vaccinating pharmacy, call 0800 28 29 26 or speak to a trusted health professional such as your GP.

Remember that if it has been six months since your second dose, you are eligible for a booster shot so you stay protected. To avoid queues, people are encouraged to book online at bookmyvaccine or by calling 0800 28 29 26.

Dunedin Hospital draws on decades-old technology to fight COVID-19

Decades-old technology is being brought back in the fight against the COVID-19 virus.

Ultraviolet-C (UV-C) light has been used extensively as a disinfectant for more than 40 years. Following research proving its effectiveness in inactivating the COVID-19 virus, the latest in UV-C lighting technology has been installed at Dunedin Hospital in what's believed to be a New Zealand first.

Patients from the southern region with COVID-19 who need to come to hospital will be cared for at Dunedin Hospital, and infectious disease physician Dr Brendan Arnold has overseen the installation of a first set of 20 Philips UV-C 'upper air disinfection units' in the hospital.

The UV-C light neutralises the virus

in the air at the top of the room while the normal hospital ventilation system circulates the air, exposing the virus to the UV-C. Staff can continue to work safely underneath.

New Zealand Country Leader for Signify (formerly Philips Lighting), Chris Morris, says laboratory research has shown that Philips UV-C disinfection upper air wall mount luminaires inactivated 99.99% of SARS-CoV-2, the virus responsible for the COVID-19 disease, in the air of a room within 10 minutes. At 20 minutes, the virus was below detectable levels.

"This indicates that, in most indoors situations, upper air UV-C can remove pathogens including SARS-Cov-2 from the air with greater efficacy than natural or mechanical ventilation," says Mr Morris.



Dr Brendan Arnold in front of a UV-C light