

# Korero.

Guidance of the New Zealand Māori Council  
Te Kaunihera Maori o Aotearoa

# COVID-19



**Guidance for Maori and  
Maori Communities /  
organisations**

## **He aha te mea nui o te ao**

What is the most important thing in the world?

## **He tangata, he tangata, he tangata**

It is the people, it is the people, it is the people

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## Introduction and context

The 1918/19 pandemic had a severe impact on Māori, whose death rate of 4.2 percent was approximately five to seven times higher than the non-Māori death rate. Māori and Pacific peoples in New Zealand had higher rates of morbidity for the influenza A (H1N1) 2009 pandemic than other ethnic groups. History, therefore, suggests that Māori and Pacific peoples are more susceptible to pandemic influenza than other groups.

The Corona Virus / COVID-19 is impacting nations and communities across the world. Here, in Aotearoa, it is likely to also have a significant impact on our health, our communities and the economy. No place has been left untouched so far and the New Zealand Māori Council has a responsibility to ensure that we offer guidance to Māori, communities and organisations so they can ready themselves for the year ahead. In this document we cover areas such as “do I or do I not hold a hui?” through to working from home, general health and wellbeing advice, things to consider if you care for mokopuna and Tangi.

Of course, each of the New Zealand Māori Council Districts, Iwi and Hapu will have their own protocols and advice based on tikanga based processes. This is, therefore, simply guidance and we that you review this, alongside other advice, in making informed decisions. The primary goal of each of us is to keep our people and each other safe. Over the coming day and weeks more advice and material will be provided through our Māori everywhere.com site as well as stock that Māori organisations and Marae can download such as health information posters. We are also posting much of this material across social media for you to share and pass on. If you have any questions about your own health, then make sure you call the health information line on 0800 358 5453.

Henare Mason  
Chair of the Council

Matthew Tukaki  
Executive Director of the Council  
Chair of the National Maori Authority

## What is a Corona Virus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses which may cause illness in animals or humans. In humans, several coronaviruses are known to cause respiratory infections ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). The most recently discovered coronavirus causes coronavirus disease COVID-19.

## What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is the infectious disease caused by the most recently discovered coronavirus. This new virus and disease were unknown before the outbreak began in Wuhan, China, in December 2019.

## The symptoms

- COVID-19 Symptoms The most common symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, tiredness, and dry cough.
- Some patients may have aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat or diarrhoea.
- These symptoms are usually mild and begin gradually. Some people become infected but don't develop any symptoms and don't feel unwell.
- Most people (about 80%) recover from the disease without needing special treatment. Around 1 out of every 6 people who gets COVID-19 becomes seriously ill and develops difficulty breathing. Older people, and those with underlying medical problems like high blood pressure, heart problems or diabetes, are more likely to develop serious illness.

- People with fever, cough and difficulty breathing should seek medical attention early and call in advance.

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## How do I catch it?

People can catch COVID-19 from others who have the virus. The disease can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are spread when a person with COVID-19 coughs or exhales. These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person. Other people then catch COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth. People can also catch COVID-19 if they breathe in droplets from a person with COVID-19 who coughs out or exhales droplets. This is why it is important to stay more than 1 meter (3 feet) away from a person who is sick. Studies to date suggest that the virus that causes COVID-19 is mainly transmitted through contact with respiratory droplets rather than through the air. See previous answer on "How does COVID-19 spread?"

## Can CoVID-19 be caught from a person who has no symptoms?

The main way the disease spreads is through respiratory droplets expelled by someone who is coughing. The risk of catching COVID-19 from someone with no symptoms at all is very low. However, many people with COVID-19 experience only mild symptoms. This is particularly true at the early stages of the disease. It is therefore possible to catch COVID-19 from someone who has, for example, just a mild cough and does not feel ill.

## Protection measures for everyone

- Stay aware of the latest information on the COVID-19 outbreak, available on the WHO website and through your national and local public health authority. Many countries around the world have seen cases of COVID-19 and several have seen outbreaks. Authorities in China and some other countries have succeeded in slowing or stopping their outbreaks. However, the situation is unpredictable so check regularly for the latest news.
- You can reduce your chances of being infected or spreading COVID-19 by taking some simple precautions:
  - Regularly and thoroughly clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand rub or wash them with soap and water.
  - Why? Washing your hands with soap and water or using alcohol-based hand rub kills viruses that may be on your hands.
  - Maintain at least 1 metre (3 feet) distance between yourself and anyone who is coughing or sneezing.
  - Why? When someone coughs or sneezes, they spray small liquid droplets from their nose or mouth which may contain virus. If you are too close, you can breathe in the droplets, including the COVID-19 virus if the person coughing has the disease.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.
- Why? Hands touch many surfaces and can pick up viruses. Once contaminated, hands can transfer the virus to your eyes, nose or mouth. From there, the virus can enter your body and can make you sick.
- Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.
- Why? Droplets spread virus. By following good respiratory hygiene, you protect the people around you from viruses such as cold, flu and COVID-19.
- Stay home if you feel unwell. If you have a fever, cough and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance. Follow the directions of your local health authority.
- Why? National and local authorities will have the most up to date information on the situation in your area. Calling in advance will allow your health care provider to quickly direct you to the right health facility. This will also protect you and help prevent spread of viruses and other infections.
- Keep up to date on the latest COVID-19 hotspots (cities or local areas where COVID-19 is spreading widely). If possible, avoid traveling to places – especially if you are an older person or have diabetes, heart or lung disease.
- Why? You have a higher chance of catching COVID-19 in one of these areas.

## Hui considerations / what might we need to know?

Our core advice:

- Postpone or cancel non-essential hui

- If hui is to be held limit the number who are physically present to no more than twenty
- Utilise online applications and platforms for things such as video conferencing
- If you do hold a physical hui make sure that social distancing measures are in place, soap or hand sanitizer is available in all bathrooms and appropriate health advice is provided
- Avoid physical contact such as hongi, hugging and kissing – instead look for a unique way of still showing respect or aroha such as a flick of the head (Kia Ora), bowing to each other and so on. Many Iwi and Hapu are coming up with unique and, often fun, ways of communicating during the crisis

At any time, around the country, the Māori Council estimates that there are upwards to a hundred hui underway. These range in size from smaller numbers to thirty or forty people right through to large gatherings in the hundreds. From small trust meetings to large kaupapa hui. For the larger meetings whanau and participants come from near and far. Our guidance is, no matter the size of the hui, to consider postponing those that are not essential but just procedural to fixing new dates in and around late June or July this year. For those that are required to legally meet based on their articles of association or trust deeds to try and move them online using applications such as ZOOM.com (which are often free for the first hour), SKYPE or a Facebook messenger group chat. For the larger kaupapa based hui we also suggest minimising the numbers per location and

move to a potential regional model while also partnering with a Government Agency or department who might be able to provide video conferencing support to connect each location up. Many Annual General Meetings don't normally occur until the end of the calendar year. If, however, you have one scheduled from the 1<sup>st</sup> of April to the end of June 2020 you might want to consider shifting the date. If you need to pass a special motion because of time constraints between one AGM and another we urge you to consult your articles of association or trust deed for further guidance on what process you might need to follow. Keep in mind that the primary concern is to find a way to still conduct your business while at the same time remaining safe and well. Council also advises the postponing of cancellation of kaumatua gatherings for the obvious reason that our elders are much more at risk from the virus than other population groups. Visitors from out of town or outside the whanau group should be asked to come another time when the virus begins to settle down.

## Tangihanga

The sad reality is that the virus is potentially the taker of a life at a time when death is still a regular feature of our world. Whether someone dies because of the virus or they die for another reason we still must gather and pay our respects to the departed. In the Te Ao Māori world that means we have Tangi and funerals every day across the country and, like hui, whanau and people travel short and long distances to bid their farewells.

Each iwi (tribe/nation) differs on how they honour those who pass. *Tangihanga* generally take three days with burial on the third day. From the moment of death, the *tūpāpaku* (body

of the deceased) is rarely alone. The tūpāpaku is transported (usually from a hospital and via a funeral home) to the marae. There they are welcomed with a pōwhiri and will lie in state for at least two nights, usually in an open coffin, in the whareniui. Because of the numbers of people who may gather, stay and join in remembrance of the deceased our advice is to always consider what you might need to do in such situations when it comes to the Tangi. For whanau and those supporting from a Marae perspective our only message is to ensure that you try and keep a measure of social distance to each other in the whareniui – if the whareniui is your main accommodation area to ensure that also follows in sleeping arrangements and if you feel that a mask is warranted while sleeping then do not be afraid to do so. Ensure that soap and hand sanitizer is made available and only drink from your cup or bottle. Marae across the nation know what they are doing when it comes to cleanliness and the Council has great faith that they will all have this in hand. Tangi is something that must continue, and our only advice is to remain alert, calm and follow the available health advice. Some people have suggested steaming a Tangi online for those to still participate in proceedings from a distance. We do not encourage that given the Council's commitment for whanau to hold true to Tapu (see below for the broad definition) and out for respect for the deceased. This also applies to images of the dead in their death state.

*TAPU: restriction, prohibition - a supernatural condition. A person, place or thing is dedicated to an atua and is thus removed from the sphere of the profane and put into the sphere of the sacred. It is untouchable, no longer to be put to common use. The violation of tapu would result in retribution, sometimes including the death of the violator and others*

*involved directly or indirectly. Appropriate karakia and ceremonies could mitigate these effects. Tapu was used as a way to control how people behaved towards each other and the environment, placing restrictions upon society to ensure that society flourished. Making an object tapu was achieved through rangatira or tohunga acting as channels for the atua in applying the tapu. Members of a community would not violate the tapu for fear of sickness or catastrophe as a result of the anger of the atua. Intrinsic, or primary, tapu are those things which are tapu in themselves. The extensions of tapu are the restrictions resulting from contact with something that is intrinsically tapu. This can be removed with water, or food and karakia. A person is imbued with mana and tapu by reason of his or her birth. High-ranking families whose genealogy could be traced through the senior line from the atua were thought to be under their special care. It was a priority for those of ariki descent to maintain mana and tapu and to keep the strength of the mana and tapu associated with the atua as pure as possible. People are tapu and it is each person's responsibility to preserve their own tapu and respect the tapu of others and of places. Under certain situations people become more tapu, including women giving birth, warriors travelling to battle, men carving (and their materials) and people when they die. Because resources from the environment originate from one of the atua, they need to be appeased with karakia before and after harvesting.*

## Employment and the workplace

Many companies and Government Departments are now moving to having employees work from home. We also encourage Māori organisations and

business to consider the same thing. However, there are guidelines that need to be followed that ensure whanau can work from home and have access to the work environment when needed. In the case that schools are closed it will become increasingly important that whanau also achieve work life balance in looking after their tamariki. If you do not have the internet ask the employer to pay for it and arrange for it to be set up and if you will need the internet you might also need credit for your mobile phone if you are not a plan or need a top up. You might also want to check with your employer if they will refund the cost of the internet per month and take on your mobile phone bill for business- or work-related calls for the interim.

## Whanau looking after whanau in state care

It is a sad normality of life that most children in the care of the State are Māori. Its also a reality that many of our elders are looking after their mokopuna and yet this group is also most susceptible to the virus. It is important that you put in place a “plan b” should you fall ill and need to self-isolate. This must include a conversation within the extended whanau and in collaboration with the Agency. The first step is to ensure that while you might not be able to continue caring for your mokopuna until the virus passes through your system there is still someone in the extended whanau that can step in. This is particularly the case when it comes to self-isolation and of course hospitalisation. Is there someone else that can be approved for care in the interim? Even if you start thinking about this now it will save time into the future if the worst-case scenario does unfold. Remember build this into your care plans and activate it if you need to.

## For those of our people working in faith organisations

(advice taken from the Anglican Church Guidelines)

In the first instance please ensure that you are familiar with the latest information regarding COVID-19 posted by the Ministry of Health on their website: [health.govt.nz](http://health.govt.nz)

Although the risk of widespread community outbreak in New Zealand is expected to remain low, ministers and churches should do what they can to minimise the risk of transmission and infection within their congregations by:

- Minimising the number of people involved in handling the elements for Holy Communion;
- Ensuring the priest washes their hands thoroughly before the service and encourage the use of hand sanitiser before the preparation of the elements.
- Suspend intinction (dipping of the bread into the chalice);
- Ensure the chalice and paten are washed with hot water and detergent after use.
- Remind congregants and ministers who feel unwell to stay home;
- Limit unnecessary personal contact.

Ministers should remain aware that the need may arise for further restrictions during services. If so, they should consider:

- Offering what is known as ‘Communion in One Kind’ only, with the people partaking only of the bread and the priest alone taking the wine.



- Suspending all hariru and hongis (as several iwi have already done), greetings with a kiss and/or handshaking, including during the 'sharing of the peace' that is part of our normal Eucharist liturgy.

Ministers and church leaders should also be aware that the need may arise to suspend, postpone, or cancel large meetings, services, diocesan and amorangi events and hui. In these cases,

advice should be sought from the office of the Bishop or other appropriate authority.

Ministers who are involved in large gatherings in community and on marae, including those who take tangihanga regularly, should stay vigilant and maintain good respiratory hygiene practices. If you or a whānau member feel unwell with a fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, please seek medical attention early and call in advance.