NEW ZEALAND

Covid 19 Omicron outbreak: 1160 new community cases; 10% of Middlemore ED patients test positive

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Dr Ashley Bloomfield on how home isolation will work during Omicron outbreak. Video / NZ Herald

NZ Herald

There are 1160 new community cases of Covid-19 today, the Ministry of Health says.

The new community cases are in Northland (24), Auckland (861), Waikato (73), Bay of Plenty (33), Lakes (5), Hawke's Bay (15), MidCentral (3), Whanganui (4), Taranaki (9), Tairāwhiti (9), Wairarapa (5), Capital and Coast (32), Hutt Valley (20), Nelson Marlborough (15), Canterbury (8), South Canterbury (3) and Southern (39).

Two of the cases' locations are unknown.

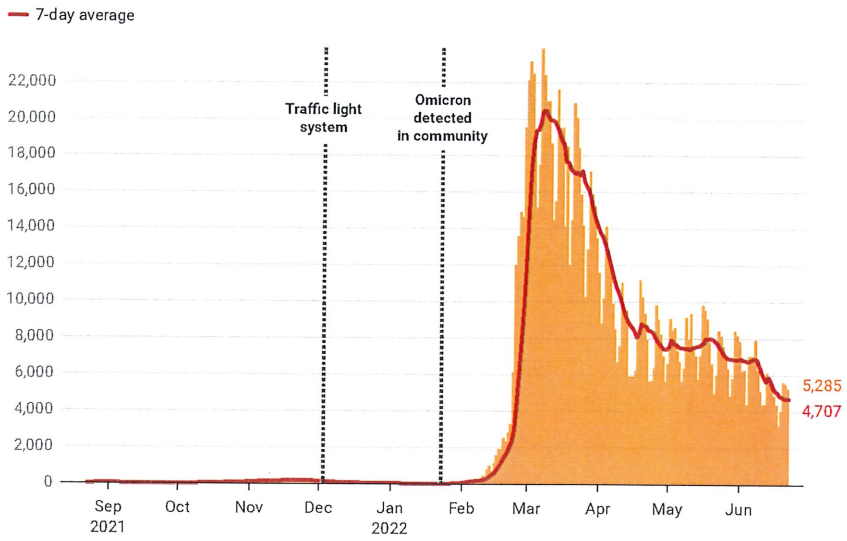
Fifty-six people are in hospital with Covid, none in ICU or HDU. The average age of those hospitalised is 65.

Of the 56 people hospitalised, two were either not vaccinated or not eligible, 23 were fully vaccinated and the vaccination status of 15 was unknown.

The Ministry of Health provides vaccination status data for those in Northern Region wards only, and excluding emergency departments. Of the 56 people hospitalised, this data was provided for 40 patients.

Forty-three new Covid infections were detected at the border.

Daily new Covid-19 community cases



Counts based on the Ministry of Health's daily 1pm update
Created with Datawrapper

At a press conference before today's cases were announced, director-general of health Dr Ashley Bloomfield revealed that 10 per cent of patients seeking treatment at Middlemore Hospital's emergency department returned a positive rapid Covid test result yesterday.

It's thought there were around 250 presentations at the ED, so 25 people would have tested positive.

Many of the people at Middlemore Hospital would have been seeking healthcare because they were symptomatic, Bloomfield said.

South Auckland has had the highest number of infections, so routinely screening people was helpful to identify cases that may not be symptomatic. RATs are not being used at all hospitals at the moment.

Despite rising case numbers, "it's not inevitable that we move to a phase 3 at this point in time", Bloomfield said. Any move to phase 3 would be signalled "well ahead".

Testing centres under pressure

In the last 24 hours, 28,140 Covid-19 tests were processed - the rolling average for the last seven days for tests is 23,480.

Health officials urged people to only seek testing if they had symptoms or were close contacts of cases.

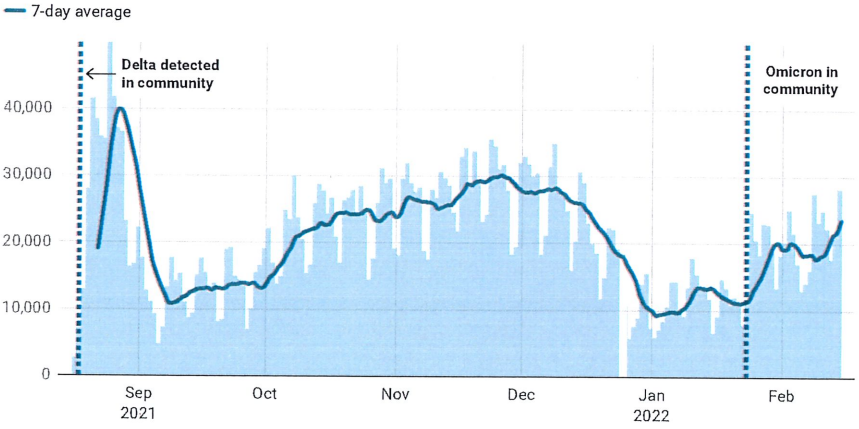
"It is encouraging to see a high level of testing this week. However, it is important the right people get tested for the right reasons. Staff at testing centres will prioritise testing for people who are close contacts or are symptomatic.

"There is good testing capacity throughout the country, but unnecessary testing could delay results for those who urgently need them."

The health ministry thanked Covid-19 testing staff for their work and asked those seeking a swab at a testing site to be patient.

"Our frontline staff across the health sector are doing the best they can to help in a timely way."

Daily Covid-19 tests processed



January figures supplied directly by Ministry of Health. Other daily totals from press releases
Source: Ministry of Health • Created with Datawrapper

Public urged to use tracer app

As New Zealand settles into day one of the second phase of the Omicron response plan, the ministry reminded the public of the importance of using the Covid-19 Tracer App.

Using the app meant a person could quickly identify if they had been at a location of interest and, if they became a case, to quickly notify contacts.

Keeping Bluetooth enabled also helped anonymously protect those the person had been near.

"Self-isolating and reducing the spread of the virus means protecting your friends, whānau, community, and keeping the businesses and health services around you open, for a more comfortable and normal life at red.

"Neither the Ministry of Health, or any other government agencies, have access to the data on your phone. This is held by you unless you agree to share it with contact tracers or upload it through the contact tracing form."

Booster, vaccine update

Yesterday, 46,156 booster doses were administered across the motu, bringing the total so far to more than two million doses.

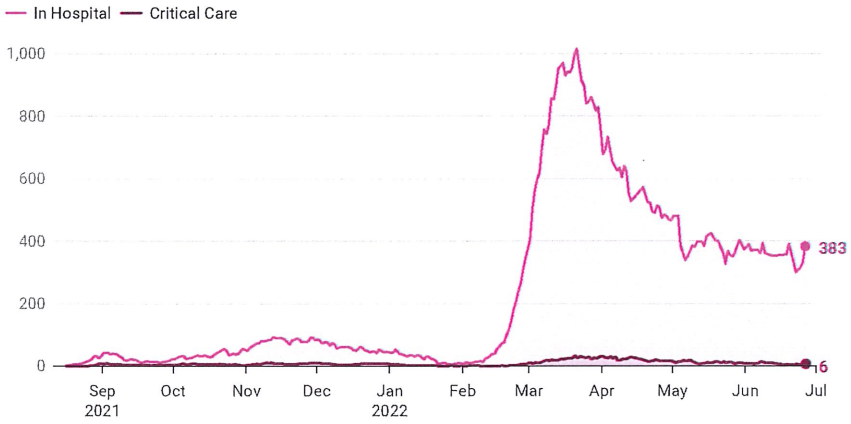
"The Ministry of Health would like to thank everyone in New Zealand who has been vaccinated. You are doing your bit to keep all New Zealanders safe.

"The booster vaccine offers a high level of protection against Omicron, so if it's been three months since you got your second dose, please get your booster as soon as possible."

To date, 62 per cent of people due their booster have received it.

Overall, 96 per cent of eligible people (aged 12 and older) have had one dose of vaccine and 95 per cent have received two.

How many people with Covid-19 are in hospital?



Critical Care includes Intensive Care (ICU) and High Dependency Units (HDU)
Created with Datawrapper

For Māori (eligible and aged 12 and older), 90 per cent have had their first dose and 86 per cent have received two.

For Pacific peoples (eligible and aged 12 and older), 97 per cent have had their first dose and 95 per cent have had their second dose.

Meanwhile, 46 per cent of the eligible children aged 5-11 have had a dose of Covid-19 vaccine.

Twenty seven per cent of eligible Māori and 37 per cent of eligible Pacific children in this age group have had their first dose of the vaccine.

Today's new border cases arrived from India (9), Japan (1), Malaysia (1), Pakistan (2), UAE (5), UK (2) and the US (2).

The full travel history of 21 of the newly detected border cases has not yet been obtained.

The seven day rolling average for border cases is 20 - and for community cases, the seven day average is 683.

There are 6721 active community cases currently - classed as cases identified in the past 21 days and not yet recovered.

774 community cases yesterday

Yesterday there were 744 cases in the community, down from 981 on Monday.

The majority of the new cases were in Auckland.

Forty people were in hospital with the virus - none in ICU or HUD.

Nineteen Covid-19 cases were detected at the border; three of these were historical.

Latest location of interest

A Queenstown restaurant is the latest high-risk location of interest to be added to the list today.

Fogo Brazilian BBQ staff are being asked to self-isolate after the restaurant was exposed to a positive case over three days.

This new location comes as Queenstown Chamber of Commerce chief executive Ruth Stokes predicted Queenstown would be closed for business by Friday because of the number of businesses confirmed as locations of interest and the number of people being forced to isolate.

1000 returnees out of MIQ

This morning, 1000 returnees in MIQ were due to be released following the country's shift into phase 2 of the Omicron response plan.

An MIQ spokesperson said under phase 2, managed isolation periods for international arrivals into New Zealand reduce from 10 days to seven days.

"This change also applies to those already in MIQ who have completed seven or more days, and are confirmed by a Medical Officer of Health that they are at low risk of having or transmitting Covid-19."

Police set to tow protesters' vehicles

Meanwhile, at Parliament, Police Commissioner Andrew Coster said tow trucks will begin removing vehicles today.

He said they have also appealed for extra assistance, including from the New Zealand Defence Force for their towing capabilities.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said the focus should be on removing illegal activity, such as vehicles blocking the roads. She repeated her request to protesters to "go home."

Asked if she was comfortable with the Defence Force being used to tow cars, she said the big issue was the equipment.

The Army did not have much equipment suitable for urban towing capacity, Ardern said.

National Party leader Christopher Luxon said he trusted police to do the job properly.

"They've got a very complex situation to manage. They've got the experience."