

Covid-19: Jacinda Ardern defends settings amid wave of reported cases

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Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern says she believes there is a high level of awareness of Covid-19 cases in the community. Photo: RNZ / Angus Dreaver

The prime minister has defended the country's current Covid-19 settings amid a wave of reported cases.

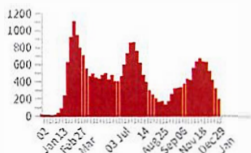
Ministry of Health modelling (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/481096/covid-19-hospital-cases-in-christmas-wave-have-potential-to-be-worst-yet-modelling-shows>) suggested daily reported cases could reach 13,000 by the end of the month.

But Jacinda Ardern said while the number of cases and hospitalisations (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/481056/covid-19-update-42-740-new-cases-64-deaths-in-past-7-days>) was serious, the health system was better able to cope now than before.

"We are not seeing at the same time a number of other significant illnesses, which is causing significant pressure on hospital resources in the way it has in the past."

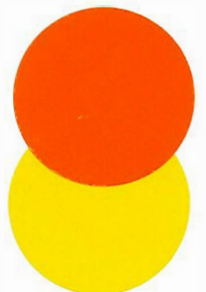
She did not believe the government nor the public were complacent about Covid-19.

Weekly admissions to hospital due to Covid-19



Total admissions for Covid in the week en

Source: [Ministry of Health](#)



Earlier this week, officials urged people to take precautions and be prepared if they caught the virus while travelling, with the country now seeing a new dominant variant for the first time since July.

BA.2.75, which is a strain of Omicron, has surpassed BA.5 (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/481071/covid-19-variant-ba-2-point-75-dominates-cases-as-holidaymakers-warned-to-take-precautions>), and the ministry warned it appeared to be more transmissible and could evade immunity from other variants, but more data was needed to be certain.

The Green Party said putting out a release with that information was not enough preparation for a possible summer surge.

Party Covid-19 response spokesperson Teanau Tuiono was critical of the shift in communication from a collective narrative to individual responsibility.

"Of course, the measures we ask people to follow will be different to what they were in 2020 but we need to get back to clear public health messaging that makes clear that we have to work together to protect those around us," Tuiono said in a statement.

"Whatever way you look at it, Covid will be a feature of many people's summer break. One modeller has recently predicted that as many as one in 20 New Zealanders could have Covid in the week of Christmas."

The biggest worry was what this meant for immunocompromised and disabled whānau, Tuiono said.

"We need to make it clear and understandable again the simple steps people can take to keep others safe."



Teanau Tuiono Photo: RNZ / Samuel Rillstone

Reported cases have likely peaked but infections may climb - Covid-19 modeller

A Covid-19 modeller said while the country had probably hit the peak of daily reported cases in the current wave, actual infections may still climb in the next few days.

There were 6124 cases reported yesterday - lower than the day before and the same day a week ago, and well below the government's 13,000 prediction.

Covid Modelling Aotearoa programme co-leader Dion O'Neale said testing and reporting always dropped during the holidays.

"Schools are ending and people are starting to knock off from work, and that's likely meant that there's lower case reporting than what there would have been, this time say a week ago," O'Neale said.

"That's going to feed into sort of obscuring what might still be some rising infections in the background."

More people were seen to be masking up (<https://www.rnz.co.nz/news/national/481152/covid-19-experts-share-simple-steps-to-socialise-safely-during-the-holidays>) to avoid a Covid-19 Christmas, O'Neale said.

"If you can have the very minor inconvenience of wearing a mask, say on public transport or while you're at the shopping mall, and that keeps you safe and means you're able to spend time with family at Christmas and do so in a safer manner, then there are people, yeah, taking those precautions."

Modelling suggested it would take about a month for the peak to subside, he said.