

National reserve supplies

National reserve supplies have been developed to ensure that as far as is possible, health services have continued access to specific critical supplies during large or prolonged emergencies that generate unusual demands on normal health service stocks or supply chains.

The Ministry's approach to establishing and maintaining an appropriate strategic national reserve is supported by [World Health Organization guidance](https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/44123)⁷ (<https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/44123>).^[1] (health.govt.nz/#ftn1)

Background

National reserve supplies were developed between 2006 and 2009. Having a national reserve of critical supplies is a key strategy used internationally by governments to mitigate the impact of supply chain disruptions and surge requirements in an emergency event.

The national reserve supplies stockpile was originally established for a possible influenza pandemic but has expanded to ensure ready health service access to supplies of critical clinical items that need to be immediately on hand in case of certain emergencies, or are likely to be in exceptionally high worldwide demand during a health emergency.

How are the supplies managed?

Following the health transformation in July 2022, the Ministry retained responsibility for setting the national reserve supplies policy direction (including composition) and transferred the supply chain functions (including procurement and storage) to Te Whatu Ora – Health New Zealand.

The supplies area managed and maintained to ensure readiness for an emergency, including replacement of expiring supplies where volumes of supply are too large to be effectively rotated through normal use.

How often are the national reserve supplies reviewed?

Potential threats to the health of New Zealanders are complex and include natural disasters and environmental hazards (eg, earthquakes, volcanic hazards, weather events), new emerging pathogens, and accidents or terrorism involving explosives, chemicals or biological threats. The composition of the national reserve supplies stockpile is continually reviewed as part of an ongoing programme of work which considers the ongoing risk of potential threats – which includes the need for, and suitability of, components of the stockpile. The last full review occurred in 2011, when it was decided that the national reserve supplies would be maintained, although the volume of some items were altered in line with revised recommendations about expected use.

The national reserve supply is undergoing a comprehensive review in 2023 to ensure the supply is able to support the New Zealand health system's responses to a wider range of hazards and risks.

The national reserve supply is operated in accordance with a [usage policy](https://health.govt.nz/publications/national-health-emergency-plan-national-reserve-supplies-management-and-usage-policies-3rd-edition) (health.govt.nz/publications/national-health-emergency-plan-national-reserve-supplies-management-and-usage-policies-3rd-edition) which includes objectives, responsibilities of government and logistics for moving supplies from bulk stores.

Why do we hold a national reserve supply of antivirals?

Current evidence shows that early use of antiviral medication may shorten the duration of illness from seasonal or pandemic influenza, and may reduce the risk of complications. It is especially recommended for critically ill hospitalised influenza patients. Evidence of the effectiveness of antiviral medication against influenza continues to be monitored. The Ministry is aware of the World Health Organization's downgrading of Oseltamivir (Tamiflu) from a 'core' essential medicine to a 'complementary' essential medicine. Evidence of the effectiveness of all antiviral medications against influenza continues to be monitored and will be taken into account as part of the ongoing review of the national strategic reserve.

The national reserve supply of antivirals is held in case of a severe pandemic resulting from the appearance of a novel influenza virus, where population immunity is lower and rates of serious

illness may be higher. Specific guidance on the use of antivirals in the event of a pandemic will be developed by a New Zealand pandemic influenza technical advisory group, taking into account the known efficacy of the antivirals against the pandemic influenza strain. If required, the antivirals will be released to hospitals and public health units for use. These measures are further described in the [New Zealand Pandemic Plan \(health.govt.nz/publications/new-zealand-pandemic-plan-a-framework-for-action\)](https://health.govt.nz/publications/new-zealand-pandemic-plan-a-framework-for-action).

Where is the stockpile located?

The national stockpile is stored in various locations across New Zealand – split over multiple sites to reduce risk and increase efficiency in distribution.

More information

Read more about influenza infection prevention and control:

- [Influenza](https://info.health.nz/conditions-treatments/infectious-diseases/flu-influenza/) [↗] (<https://info.health.nz/conditions-treatments/infectious-diseases/flu-influenza/>)

Read more about the annual influenza immunisation programme:

- [Flu \(influenza\) vaccines](https://www.immunise.health.nz/about-vaccines/nz-immunisations/flu-influenza-vaccine/) [↗] (<https://www.immunise.health.nz/about-vaccines/nz-immunisations/flu-influenza-vaccine/>)

If organisations do have out of date antiviral stocks, they should contact their local DHB Pharmacist to arrange for appropriate disposal.

Information not available publicly

Not all information can be made publicly available. Due to commercial sensitivities, the Ministry does not release individual costs associated with the national reserve supplies. This is allowed under the following sections of the Official Information Act:

Section (9)(2)(b)

(to) protect information where the making available of the information—

- *(i) would disclose a trade secret; or*

- (ii) would be likely unreasonably to prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied or who is the subject of the information;

Section (9)(j)

(to) enable a Minister of the Crown or any department or organisation holding the information to carry on, without prejudice or disadvantage, negotiations (including commercial and industrial negotiations);

[1] (health.govt.nz#ftnref1) The WHO 2009 guidance document [Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response](https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/44123)[↗] (<https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/44123>) which recommends national actions to 'estimate and prioritise antiviral requirements for treatment and prophylaxis'.

Other websites

-  [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) analysis and position on stockpiling and use of oseltamivir in the management of influenza \(PDF, 413 KB\) \(<https://www.izsummitpartners.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/CDC-Influenza-Division-Antiviral-Key-Points-April-10.pdf>\)](https://www.izsummitpartners.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/CDC-Influenza-Division-Antiviral-Key-Points-April-10.pdf)
-  [Pandemic Influenza Risk Management: a WHO guide \(<https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/259893>\)](https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/259893)

Related areas

-  [National Health Emergency Plan: National Reserve Supplies Management and Usage Policies, 3rd edition \(\[health.govt.nz/publications/national-health-emergency-plan-national-reserve-supplies-management-and-usage-policies-3rd-edition\]\(http://health.govt.nz/publications/national-health-emergency-plan-national-reserve-supplies-management-and-usage-policies-3rd-edition\)\)](http://health.govt.nz/publications/national-health-emergency-plan-national-reserve-supplies-management-and-usage-policies-3rd-edition)

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