

Dear Practitioners

The Prime Minister has announced that New Zealand will move to COVID19 Alert Level 3 from 11.59 pm on Monday 27 April. This will be reviewed following two weeks at Alert Level 3 to assess the success of virus elimination.

The government has indicated that 'In Alert Level 3 the following guidance remains:

'Virtual appointments should be provided where possible and is the preferred method of service delivery. Face-to-face appointments may be provided for urgent care only so long as professionals can take appropriate measures to manage public health.' For podiatry services to be provided **safely**, restrictions on providing **urgent and essential podiatry services only continue to apply**.

Together with the Ministry and in collaboration with other regulatory authorities with input from providers across the sector and associations, the Board has developed [guidelines for Podiatrists](#) and a [triage flowchart](#) to allow you to continue to support your patients under the new Alert Level 3 restrictions.

Possible moves to Alert Level 2 and 1 in the future:

The Board is similarly working on guidelines for when alert levels are de-escalated further to levels 2 and 1.

The public health and social measures which apply at these levels have yet to be defined in detail by the government and we will release level 2 and 1 guidelines for you as soon as these details have been finalised by the Ministry of Health.

The Podiatrists Board role:

Over the last weeks, the COVID-19 response has been evolving and changing and will likely continue to do so. Gathering information and applying in the context of podiatry has been extremely challenging. We have been liaising closely with the Ministry of Health and other regulators, taking lessons learnt from international partners and consulting with providers and professional associations to help determine standards, guidance, and the level of information we provide.

Specialised advice on the clinical aspects of COVID-19 and the impacts on delivering health services is provided by the Ministry of Health, subject matter experts, and other government authorities.

Our remit is limited to providing guidance based on direction from government and other relevant higher authorities to ensure you provide care that is safe for your patients and for you during the pandemic response.

We understand the greatest challenge with providing care safely for many practitioners has been access to adequate supplies of PPE. These concerns have been relayed to the relevant departments in the Ministry and we are aware many DHBs have been working with private practices to make supplies available where possible. Further, we understand that PPE supply is now accessible through some sources, and we urge practitioners to continue to work together, and with your local DHB, podiatry suppliers and associations, to overcome ongoing issues.

Again, thank you

Being a Podiatrist can be challenging and stressful at the best of times, and even more so now as we face the uncertainty of a global pandemic. All New Zealanders can be proud of the way we have managed lockdown and cared for ourselves, families, whanau, and each other.

We are aware that many practitioners are currently facing severe impacts on your businesses, livelihoods, and personal wellbeing. We encourage you to seek help and support from those close to you, your own doctor, and other organisations able to assist.

From all of us at the Board, we thank you for the support many have provided and expressed over the last weeks. To all Podiatrists, thank you for your continuing hard work, care, and commitment to supporting New Zealanders and keeping us all safe.

Kind regards

Fiona Angus
Podiatrists Board Chair

