

# COVID-19 Alert Level 2 and our practice....

COVID-19 Alert Level 2 allows more patients to be seen in person but this is NOT a full return to “face to face” or “kanohi ki te kanohi” consultations as we had before the Shutdown or in Level 1.

- **Masks:** You will be required to wear a mask or face shield and all staff will also do this. As Delta can be transmitted by aerosol, we will not be performing any respiratory procedures such as nebulization or lung function testing in the surgery proper. These may require you to be in a negative pressure room at Hawera or Base hospital.
- **Distancing:** We will be insisting on a 2 metre separation from staff or other patients except during brief examinations or procedures requiring closer proximity to the GP, who will wear a face mask and shield to protect us both.
- **Waiting Room:** Generally only one patient (with family/supporter/bubble) should be in the Waiting Room at any time, others may be asked to wait on the veranda or in the hall (used for ‘flu vaccinations to reduce Waiting Room Risk).
- **Hand Sanitising:** We are trying to prevent any virus contaminating the practice and thus putting high risk patients in danger, so you will be required to sanitise your hands **BEFORE** you enter the surgery.
- **Contact Tracing:** Please scan the QR code or if you do not have an appointment you are required to sign in and leave contact details. We are trying to make this more private and can assure you that your information will only be used to contact you if you could be a contact with a known case.
- **COVID-19 vaccination:** We are asking all our patients 12 and above to attend the Hawera Hub to obtain their Pfizer BioNTech vaccine as soon as possible to protect yourself, children under 12 and high risk patients and to enable a return to more normal social interactions. **However, once there are confirmed cases (or positive waste-water tests) in South Taranaki, only double-vaccinated patients will be allowed in the waiting room** to protect those at risk and prevent staff from becoming infected (although all staff are double vaccinated).

If you have any concerns about COVID vaccination, rest assured the initial trials showed more deaths in the placebo groups, billions of doses have now been given without any increase in death or morbidity over background rates and most importantly, if you are pregnant or have serious health problems you will not tolerate a COVID-19 infection very well, risking serious harm or death to yourself (and any unborn child) just to avoid a slight ache in the arm or feeling a little off for a day or so.

There are only two remaining reasons for not vaccinating:

[1] Needle phobia. While the shots are usually painless, we can supply a mild anti-anxiety pill on request for you to take before your dose;

[2] Belief in misinformation. Social media is NOT a reliable source of science, start trusting the experts trained to interpret science, namely GPs and Epidemiologists. Main-stream media also performs fact checks.

- **Minor Surgery and longer procedures:** Higher level P.P.E. will be used by the GP and the patient will need to wear a mask which we can provide. Do not delay getting those abnormal lumps and changing skin conditions checked out and if needed removed by a very experienced operator (he says modestly).
- **Remote Consultations:** When an “in person” consultation is not necessary, phone or email consultations may continue to be available a bit longer BUT these will attract the same fee as in-person consultations and WILL NOT be a significant feature in the future in this practice as many essential aspects of a good consultation, not least the examination, are missing, creating potential risks. Our practice advises kanohi ki te kanohi as gold standard.
- **Repeat Prescriptions:** Similarly, many patients who have had their regular prescriptions repeated without a consultation (remote or in person) will need to be seen the next time. You can minimise the need for requiring extra “top up” prescriptions by checking that you do have three month’s supply of any regularly used item. If, for instance you have two month’s left of item “A” and none left of say items “B” and “C”, we can give just a month of “A” and three months of “B” & “C” to line them up.

