

COVID-19 update as it affects our practice....

at Level 1

The move to COVID-19 Level 1 will allow patients to be seen in person, “face to face” or “kanohi ki te kanohi”, similar to before the Shutdown. This practice will no longer offer remote consultations except in unusual circumstances and at a higher fee as these create far more uncertainty, can take longer and are not always safe practise.

- **Masks:** Masks primarily protect others from your secretions so are now only needed if you have respiratory symptoms, particularly coughing or sneezing. Even N95 masks only protect against 95% of small airborne particles, and all lower standard masks (even surgical masks) protect far less, so if you have symptoms, please let us know so we can use face shields to protect us!
- **Distancing:** If you have respiratory symptoms we will be insisting on waiting in a separate room and maintaining a 2 metre separation from staff or other patients except during examinations or procedures requiring closer proximity to the GP, who will generally still wear a face shield (at least) to protect us both. If direct contact is needed we will be asking that you turn your head and avoid unnecessary talking while close to reduce droplet spread.
- **Waiting Room:** Generally we will still try to maintain 2 metre separation from other patient groups and staff in the Waiting Room. If you have respiratory symptoms you will be asked to wait in a separate room.
- **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.
- **Minor Surgery and longer procedures:** These are “back to normal” but we may ask the patient 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).
- **Repeat Prescriptions:** If you have had a repeat prescription over the COVID-19 restriction period without a consultation (remote or in person), you will need to be seen next time.

Finally, PLEASE do not complain about our very low private fees (half of what funded practices get). The practice has been non-viable financially for some time and we only survived COVID-19 with the Wage Subsidy and using our retirement savings, so we can no longer subsidise you. If you want a subsidised population based polyclinic service with very limited GP access, there are two clinics in Hawera but we prefer the traditional patient centred timely General Practice. A service can be - **cheap**, **high quality** and **timely**, but only ever two of those three, and we have chosen to focus on the latter two.