

COVID-19 – Alert Level 3 Guidelines: Updated 19 October 2021

Appointments for allied health services such as physiotherapy, podiatry, optometry and Well Child Tamaraki Ora services will continue to be mainly online or over the phone. Some face-to-face physiotherapy, podiatry, optometry appointments may be provided so long as professionals can take appropriate measures to manage public health risks.

If you decide to practise:

You must follow the Ministry of Health Alert Level 3 guidance for Allied Health Practitioners in a non-district health board (DHB) setting flowchart [click here](#)¹.

Remember, seeing patients should be based on risk and that you will be required to use appropriate clinical reasoning when deciding if you need to see the patient. Telehealth and virtual appointments are still the preferred option. If that is not possible, then is it:

1. A treatment that cannot be delayed or carried out remotely without risk of significant harm or permanent and/or significant disability.
2. Where failure to access services will lead to an acute deterioration of a known condition.
3. Where delay in access to services will impact the consumer's ability to maintain functional independence and significantly negatively impact quality of life.

If you then proceed to see the patient, you must have:

1. Staff being fully vaccinated
2. Understanding the ventilation capabilities of the environment they would be operating in e.g. maximise natural ventilation- can you allow in fresh or pumped-in air?
3. Ensure health practitioners have a high level of competence around IPC requirements, including use of personal protective equipment. Further information can be found [click here](#)²

Advice on [Risk assessment](#) is found at the bottom of the flowchart [click here](#)³

The Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians Board (the Board) wants to emphasise that it is your responsibility as a practitioner to ensure you are undertaking all practicable steps to mitigate the risk of becoming a transmission vector for COVID-19. If an appointment can be deferred to a lower level, then you should do so. Commercial gain should not influence your decision making.

The Board also recommends that you continue to work collaboratively with your district health board (DHB). Follow, at a minimum, the current Ministry of Health guidelines, published on their website and stay in contact with your professional body including the New Zealand Association of Optometrists (NZAO) and The Association of Dispensing Opticians of New Zealand (ADONZ).

The Board would like to remind all Optometrists and Dispensing Opticians the importance of adhering to the Alert Level 3 protocols.

¹ https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/hp7861_-_al3_guidance_flow_chart_v5.pdf

² <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-central-supply/personal-protective-equipment-use-health-and-disability-care-settings>

³ <https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/alert-levels-3-and-4-risk-assessment-questions-if-covid-19-status-is-unknown-1sep21.pdf>