

Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19

This information is for Ara students and is current as at Wednesday 18 March 2020.



Q. How big is the risk of COVID-19 in Christchurch?

A. At the time of writing there have been twenty confirmed cases and no deaths in New Zealand. [This information from the Ministry of Health](#) is very helpful and is regularly updated. The risk in New Zealand continues to remain low.

Maintaining good personal hygiene, including handwashing, is still one of the best forms of protection. Anyone who is concerned and would like medical advice is encouraged to phone Healthline (0800 358 5453) or the Ara Health Centre (03 940 7566). Please phone before visiting the Health Centre.

COVID-19 is a notifiable infectious disease. Treatment for people who have, or who are suspected of having, COVID-19 is publicly funded under the infectious disease exception (to manage risks to other persons). **Importantly this includes treatment for international students.** More information is available on the [Ministry of Health's website](#).

Q. What is Ara doing in response to the latest news and government announcements about COVID-19?

A. Since Monday 27 January 2020 the Coronavirus Management Group has been meeting and providing information updates, monitoring the development of the virus, and taking actions that ensure Ara is aligned to government, Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Education (MoE), Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) and regional health decisions and protocols.

On Friday 13 March 2020 Ara activated our Incident Management Team (IMT), which includes expertise and leaders from across the organisation. The IMT is meeting daily from Tuesday 17 March to plan for future possibilities. We will regularly communicate their decisions to tutors and to you.

The focus of this group is to manage our response to the ever changing COVID-19 landscape, and to ensure we have the right preparations in place for future developments. While there remains much uncertainty, the IMT's work includes planning for the possibility of community transmission and should there then be a decision to close organisations like Ara.

As at this time no instruction has been received and no decision has been made to close down Ara.

We have with regret, previously communicated the decision to postpone the March graduation ceremonies. We have also decided to postpone/cancel any Ara events with over 100 people present until further notice.

Q. What is Ara doing, and what can I do, around maintaining personal hygiene?

A. We've received regular questions around two topics:

- Paper towels – we have air dryers in washrooms and don't intend to introduce paper towels. Bringing a personal hand towel could be an option.
- 'Keep cups' – in busy public spaces we're recommending using disposable cups rather than 'keep cups' until COVID-19 is ended.

Q. Now that the government has changed the rules about self-isolation what does it mean?

A. The Ministry of Health refers to two types of self-isolation.

Firstly, for those returning from international travel who have been asked to self-isolate as a precautionary measure to protect those around you, including your peers, whanau family and friends.

As much as possible, you should limit your contact with people other than the family members or companions you may have travelled with. You should avoid having visitors to your home, and avoid situations where you have face-to-face contact closer than two metres for more than 15 minutes. Don't share dishes, drinking glasses, cups, eating utensils, towels, pillows or other items with other people in your home. Other household residents do not need to self-isolate when these precautions are followed.

The second reason for self-isolation at home is in the event of confirmed COVID-19 or contact with someone who has been tested positive for the virus. If this is the case, as much as possible, you should stay in a room by yourself. It should be well-ventilated (e.g. open windows), but you should keep the door closed.

Keep your distance from other people, including at home, by limiting your movements in shared spaces and using a separate washing area if possible. You should only leave your home or accommodation to get urgent medical care and under no circumstances go to work or visit any public areas. Call ahead before visiting your doctor and again take all the precautions that you sensibly can.

The Ministry of Health provides plenty of useful information on self-isolation here:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-health-advice-general-public/covid-19-staying-home-self-isolation>

Q. What is Ara's protocols around international travel?

A. We have suspended all business related international travel for Ara staff until further notice. We are concerned for the health, safety and wellbeing of everybody at Ara and especially for all students. We would advise you against any international travel and to also keep any domestic travel to a minimum.

Q. What happens if I am feeling generally unwell?

A. The strong advice from the Ministry of Health is to be cautious and if you are feeling unwell talk with your tutor and your health professional and stay away from your classes. We want to ensure continuity of your learning experience wherever possible and we will be providing more information on this over the next couple of days.

Q. Where can I get more information?

A. We will continue to provide more information as it is made available. We are communicating with all students through [myAra](#) and making regular public updates available on our Ara website – www.ara.ac.nz.
