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## Covid-19: Ministry outlines resurgence plan in case of summer outbreak

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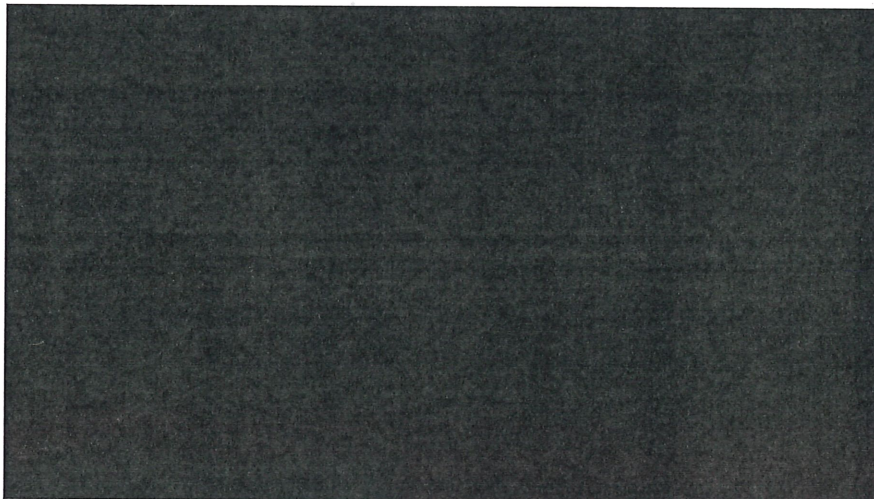
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New Zealanders need to be prepared to stay put if caught up in Covid-19 outbreak over summer, but ready to return home if outbreak has spread widely, the government says.



Covid-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins and Dr Bloomfield are outlining to the public what planning is in place, and what New Zealanders may have to do if there is another outbreak.

Hipkins says the summer holiday period poses some unique challenges in responding to an outbreak.

"Large numbers of us will be travelling for holidays or seasonal work, there are more social

gatherings and large events such as festivals - and, like other Kiwis, there will be health system workers taking well-deserved leave," he says.

"Although we can't predict exactly where or how a community case might emerge, New Zealanders can be reassured planning has been extensive, and has included scenario testing and understanding actions that might be needed, including, as a last resort, alert level changes."

Hipkins says people need to be prepared for their plans to change and carry extra supplies, including hand sanitiser and face coverings.

He says people need to continue to wash their hands, use the Covid tracer app, including the Bluetooth function, and get tested and stay home if they are sick.

The government's planning is based on three broad scenarios, ranging from the best to worst case scenario in the event of a community case.

Three scenarios:

- **Scenario 1, border worker tests positive:** Contact tracing, testing, and isolation systems come into effect, New Zealand likely remains at alert level 1.
- **Scenario 2, person tests positive while on holiday, linked to border:** Local or regional testing is ramped up, targeted restrictions and alert level changes possible. Campers asked to follow official advice.
- **Scenario 3, person tests positive after attending large music festival with no link to border:** High risk of transmission across the country, testing capacity ramps up nationwide and national alert level changes possible. Events may be cancelled, NZers asked to stay in their bubble and wait for official advice.

Hipkins says if there is an outbreak at a campsite or music festival, people would need to initially stay where they were while officials assess the situation.

This could lead to targeted restrictions or alert level changes, and people would be asked to follow official advice.





Minister for Covid-19 Response Chris Hipkins and Director-General of Health Dr Ashley Bloomfield Photo: RNZ / Samuel Rillstone

Scenario planning also includes someone testing positive after they had travelled home from a music festival and investigations finding no clear link to the border.

"In a worst-case scenario, if it became clear there was a high risk of widespread transmission, you'd need to stay where you are and in your bubble until you get official advice," Hipkins says. "We don't want people rushing home and possibly taking the virus with them."

He said people would also need to be prepared for such a scenario triggering a change to alert level 3, meaning people may have to return home.

"It's important to remember that this is a worst-case scenario. After a long, hard year, we all deserve to enjoy our summer - including those who are working hard through the holidays to keep us safe. Let's thank them by each and every one of us doing our bit to stop the spread of Covid-19," Hipkins said.

Dr Bloomfield says we are coming to the end of a year that has felt longer than most and although New Zealanders and ministry staff alike will be looking forward to a break, we need to be prepared for an outbreak of Covid-19 for our first summer with the virus.

"In each of these scenarios ... there are extensive contingency plans across the wider government," he says.

"We do know what to do, our DHBs do all have summer preparedness plans in place."

He said the core systems of testing, isolating and contact tracing were established, "and we know they work".

He said he was confident in the planning across government and the contact tracing systems.

Dr Bloomfield acknowledges it is possible testing will drop off over summer, but says the most important testing is at the border.

- **If you have symptoms of the coronavirus, call the NZ Covid-19 Healthline on 0800 358 5453 (+64 9 358 5453 for international SIMs) or call your GP - don't show up at a medical centre**

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