

Update on COVID-19 cases — 20 February 2022

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Read today's update on COVID-19 cases and Omicron from the Ministry of Health.

Today's COVID-19 numbers

- 2522 new community cases
- 17 new cases identified at the border
- 100 cases in hospital
- 27,825 total tests in the last 24 hours

Due to a database reporting issue, today's data cannot currently be provided around the COVID-19 vaccine.

[COVID-19 data and statistics](#)

Rapid antigen testing update

From Monday morning, rapid antigen tests (RATs) will be made available at all Auckland testing sites to those who fit the appropriate clinical criteria. The site will determine which test (PCR or a RAT) is best for you

Access to RATs will be expanded further during the coming week.

As the outbreak grows more people will have COVID-19 and there will be more close contacts we need to test. As planned we will now increase the use of RATs in Phase 2 and Phase 3 of our response in order to relieve pressure on the PCR testing and reserve it for those most likely to have COVID-19.

Only those with symptoms or who have been identified as close contacts of a case, or directed by a health professional to get tested should be turning up at testing sites.

Some important points for the public to be aware of are:

- people who are directed to have a RAT will be given advice on what to do if they have a positive result. At the current time, they will likely be advised that they need to have a PCR test to confirm the positive result.
- RATs are not as accurate as PCR tests at identifying someone early in their illness so if you have a negative rapid antigen test result and symptoms start to develop, you may need to have another test.
- This is also why it is so important that if you are unwell, you must stay home regardless of the test result, which will also help reduce the spread of other viruses.
- RATs will initially be available in Auckland, as we continue to widen access in other high-demand centres around New Zealand. We will provide updates on this rollout over the coming week.
- We have good stocks of RATs (7.3 million) to support the public health response, with a continual supply arriving by airfreight

Testing continues to be one of our best defences against COVID-19. Understandably as case numbers grow, so too does demand on COVID-19 testing sites.

That's why it's important to reiterate once again that people do not need to get tested, unless they are unwell with cold or flu symptoms, have been identified as a close contact of a case or have been instructed to do so by health officials.

As this demand has grown, some COVID-19 test results for Auckland and Waikato are currently taking longer to process at laboratories. The use of rapid antigen testing, alongside PCR testing, will improve this process at a time of exceptional demand in Phase 2, provided the testing centre queues are freely available for those who really need a test.

[Update on today's COVID-19 cases | health.govt.nz](#) (<https://www.health.govt.nz/news-media/news-items/more-21-million-boosters-given-nationally-1901-community-cases-76-hospital>)

