
All District Health Boards

COVID-19 FAQs: EMPLOYEE ADVICE FOR TRAVEL

Updated 23 February 2022

This advice is accurate as at **23 February 2021**.

It has been developed by the 20 DHBs to provide clarity for general employment-related questions that may arise in relation to the current travel situation domestically and internationally.

The advice will continue to be reviewed and may change rapidly given the nature of the Government and health system's response to COVID-19.

We continue to encourage the use of Zoom and other tools to conduct business rather than face-to-face meetings.

Entering New Zealand in 2022:

New Zealand's border is reopening in stages for fully vaccinated travellers to enter New Zealand and self-isolate instead of going into managed isolation and quarantine.

For full information please refer to the [Immigration website](#).

Step 1 – from February 28 The border opens to New Zealanders and other eligible travellers coming from Australia.

This means you can enter New Zealand and self-isolate if you:

- are an NZ citizen, resident or otherwise eligible to enter NZ while the border is restricted
- are fully vaccinated
- have spent the previous 14 days in Australia or NZ
- have had the pre-departure tests you need.

Step 2 – from March 14 The border opens to New Zealanders and other eligible travellers coming from anywhere in the world.

This means you can travel to New Zealand and self-isolate if you:

- are eligible to enter the border while it is restricted, including if you have a border exception
- meet health requirements, including being fully vaccinated and getting pre-departure tests.

Further border openings for specific scenarios/visa types are listed in detail on the above webpage.

The Governments current travel advice Travel advice for New Zealanders can be found at <https://safetravel.govt.nz/covid-19-coronavirus>.

Current government advice is not to travel overseas.

Those considering undertaking personal travel should do so under the principle of 'flyer beware' and that it is at your own risk. Whatever the reason for international travel, people need to plan for the possibility of having travel disrupted.

Self-isolation requirements and other costs should be factored into any leave request for international travel, understanding that circumstances are constantly changing and border entry/MIQ requirements and plans now may change again.

For more information on quarantine-free travel and Government travel advisories, please visit <https://covid19.govt.nz/travel-and-the-border/>.

You might also wish to discuss your travel plans and associated risks with your union.

What is the DHB position on travel?

Under current circumstances there are four types of travel:

- Work-related domestic travel;
- Work-related international travel;
- Continuing Medical Education (CME) travel (domestic or international); and
- Personal travel (domestic or international).

This advice is subject to regular revision and can change – please talk to your HR, manager or union

Travel is for:	DHB policy:
1. Work related domestic travel (approved by DHB)	The cost of travel and any disruptions will be covered by your DHB or DHB insurance.
2. Work related international travel (approved by DHB)	The cost of travel and any disruptions will be covered by your DHB or DHB insurance. Please note that any periods in managed isolation/self-isolation with international travel if you are unable to work from home will be paid as special leave
3. Continuing Medical Education (CME) travel (domestic or international) (approved by DHB or by virtue of collective agreement provisions)	The cost of travel and any disruptions related to CME will be covered by your DHB or DHB insurance and that <i>unless otherwise specified to you in writing prior to or on your travel being approved.</i>
4. Personal travel (domestic or international).	Any cost of travel or disruption will be met by the employee. If you do not have the ability to work remotely as previously agreed with your manager then you will be required to take Annual Leave or Leave Without Pay. This includes any periods required for self-isolation or managed isolation.

Some additional/more specific scenarios are set out in more detail.

Can I travel for work-related activity if the border is open?

Yes, however given there is still the possibility of having travel disrupted, we continue to encourage the use of zoom/skype to undertake these activities rather than attending face-to-face meetings requiring international travel.

There will be instances where work-related travel is unavoidable because there are no New Zealand-based alternatives, remote meeting options are unavailable or inappropriate (e.g. formal examinations as part of training programmes; professional certification processes), or the purpose is non-deferrable.

Such travel will require approval in accordance with DHB policies or your employment agreement. Travel bookings should not be made until approval is granted if this is required.

Can I use my continuing medical education (CME) or similar entitlements to undertake international travel?

The DHB appreciates that employees will be interested in accessing education opportunities that require international travel.

As with other work-related travel, we encourage you to attend CME or similar activity virtually where available (CME entitlements can be used to support virtual attendance).

Where CME-related travel is to occur you should have a plan with your manager to manage the risk arising from overseas travel, which may mean you cannot return home and resume work as expected. This may include where CME entitlements will need to be used to meet costs not covered by DHB insurance.

What if I was booked to travel for work purposes and I incur cancellation charges not covered by insurance?

Where the travel has been directed by the DHB or is an entitlement under a collective agreement and there are cancellation costs not covered by vendors or DHB insurance, these will be met by the DHB. If you are required to undertake a period of managed isolation (should this resume) on your return to New Zealand, the DHB will meet the charges for the managed isolation room (as the first or only person in the room).

Can I travel for non-work related/personal reasons if the border is open?

Yes, however private/non-work-related international travel should be considered with caution. Travellers are encouraged to be prepared that travel plans may be disrupted as the situation can change at any time. This also means factoring in if you have sufficient leave and can cover potential costs incurred.

Personal overseas travel is your own choice but we encourage you to discuss this with your manager and what your plans are if the border closes and you either cannot get home or need to isolate overseas or on return to NZ should this resume. This may impact on your ability to take leave.

What will be considered when I submit an annual leave request?

If the DHB has concerns about your ability to return from leave they will discuss this with you prior to approving the leave request, noting that approval cannot be unreasonably withheld. You may also want to discuss any leave plans with your union.

What happens if I travel and the borders close while I'm overseas/in the air?

It is not possible to predict if or when changes may occur internationally.

If managed or self-isolation is required to or from New Zealand, or between destinations during your overseas travel, special leave for personal travel will not apply unless there are exceptional circumstances by agreement with your manager. Other forms of leave and/or alternative working arrangements should be discussed with your line manager.

If quarantine-free travel is paused while a plane is mid-air, the government of the country the plane lands in will decide what happens to travellers in this situation.

What leave will be available to me if my travel is disrupted and/or I am required to enter managed or self-isolation when I return to New Zealand?

If you are unable to work remotely while you are in managed or self-isolation then the type of leave will depend on the basis of your travel.

If you were directed to travel by the DHB for work-related purposes or for CME the DHB will provide paid special leave of up to 10 days or for the period of required isolation.

If you were travelling for personal reasons – e.g. annual leave – then you will need to take further annual leave or leave without pay. If you are unwell during your isolation period, you may use your paid sick leave entitlements.

What happens if I contract COVID-19 while I am overseas?

You need to consider the impact on travel if you contract COVID-19 while in another country. The government travel criteria, which you will need to meet before being cleared to return to New Zealand can be found [here](#).

If you contract COVID-19 while overseas for work-related travel you will be entitled to a period of sick leave.

If you contract COVID-19 while on a flight returning to New Zealand you will be entitled to special leave regardless of if your travel was for personal or work-related.

Do I need a COVID-19 test before I return to work?

Most travellers must have:

- their COVID-19 test sample taken and a negative pre-departure test result returned within 72 hours of the scheduled departure time of your first international departure
- and approved documentation to enter New Zealand.

The DHB may require you to undertake additional testing prior to returning to work following overseas travel.

We understand this continues to be a difficult time. Please discuss with your manager, HR or union if you have concerns or questions. EAP services are also available in your DHB.