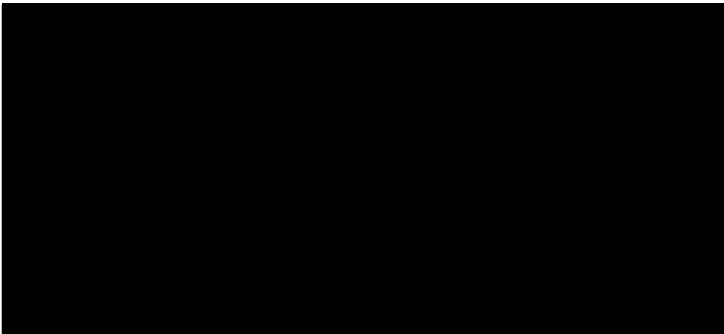


03 November 2020



Re: Official Information Request – Workers who have received fit testing

I refer to your official information request dated 17 September 2020 to the MoH. The MoH have transferred parts 1 and 2 of your request to Auckland DHB on 1 October 2020. You requested the following information:

- 1. What is the percentage of workers across the whole of the DHB who have received fit testing in the previous twelve months?**
- 2. What are the actual numbers of each DHB (are some DHBs performing better than others)**

The Northern Region District Health Boards (Northland, Waitematā, Auckland, and Counties Manukau DHBs) are operating a joint response to COVID-19 - the Northern Region Health Coordination Centre (NRHCC).

The NRHCC was activated in late January in response to the pandemic. It includes a regional clinical technical advisory group (CTAG) that provides clinical oversight of infection prevention and control measures related to the pandemic and links to the national CTAG at the Ministry of Health.

For this reason we are responding to your request on behalf of the three district health boards (Waitematā, Auckland, and Counties Manukau DHBs) in the Northern Region that this OIA pertains to.

Please find below fit testing information for the three DHBs. Each of our DHBs employs a mix of non-clinical and clinical staff working in different settings.

In the context of COVID-19, well-fitted N95 respirators are recommended as part of personal protective equipment when performing aerosol-generating procedures. There are other

situations, such as working with cytotoxic drugs, where an N95 respirator is a required part of respiratory protection.

Each DHB has a fit-testing programme for staff working in healthcare settings where N95 mask use is required as part of personal protective equipment (PPE).

Waitematā District Health Board (as at 28 October 2020)

Waitematā DHB is implementing a respiratory protection programme which includes an ongoing mask fit-testing programme to ensure the safety of staff and patients.

The DHB is currently in the fourth round of staff fit-testing due to the introduction of new mask products as the availability of some models were impacted by high global demand. The fit-testing process starts again each time a new mask enters our supply chain.

Staff involved in the management of patients who have potentially contracted COVID-19 are considered to be at highest-risk of contracting the disease and are, therefore, given highest priority for fit-testing.

No staff member is able to be involved in caring for 'blue stream' patients (those who have a high index of suspicion of exposure to COVID-19), nor are they able to conduct aerosol-generating procedures, until they have been fit-tested.

Waitematā DHB has a centralised fit-testing programme and in-team trainer model for the approximately 848 staff who need to wear N95/P2 respirators (masks) as part of our COVID-19 response.

Staff requiring fit-testing work in the following areas:

- Emergency departments
- Intensive care medicine
- Designated COVID ward areas
- Theatre
- Clinical support services
- Dental services
- Other patient care services that would use aerosol-generating procedures - for example, in respiratory medicine.

All staff working in these areas are taught how to ensure a secure seal for the mask they are wearing and are fit-tested for their mask by trained staff.

As at 28 October 2020, 87% of this group (742) have an up-to-date fit-test for the mask product currently in-use. Fit-testing for the remaining 13% is planned within the next two weeks.

Another 944 of our staff have been identified as people who may be required to wear an N95 respirator as part of their normal duties.

As at 28 October 2020, 39% of this group (365) have an up-to-date mask fit-test for the mask product currently in-use. Fit-testing for the remaining 61% will be prioritised from next week onwards.

Auckland District Health Board (as at 28 October 2020)

Auckland DHB has approximately 11,689 staff. Not all of our staff are required to wear N95/P2 respirators (masks) as part of normal duties or as part of our COVID-19 response.

We have identified 3,050 of staff needing to be fitted to N95. These staff mostly work in the following areas:

- Emergency departments
- Critical care unit
- COVID-19, TB and related wards
- Specific cancer and blood services
- Perioperative services
- Surgical services
- Other services that would use aerosol generating procedures, for example in respiratory laboratories

All staff working in these areas have education in the 'secure seal check' method, ensuring the respirators are worn properly. The 'secure seal check' is a subjective self-check aimed to detect good facial seal through the absence of air leaks using both positive and negative pressure tests. This is our minimum safety standard.

At Auckland DHB we expect all staff who need to wear a N95 respirator to have an objective fit test for a suitable mask as fit checking is subjective can be unreliable. We fit and re-fit staff into N95 respirators that have a secure supply chain. An objective fit test includes either:

- Qualitative fit-testing that uses aerosolised test agents and determines mask fitness by the inability of the mask wearer to taste the test agents
- Quantitative fit-testing that uses a device that counts particles of a predefined particle size typically inside and outside the mask.

The objective fit test is completed by trained staff and recorded centrally so we can monitor. Annual fit-testing is required.

As at 28 October 2020, 65.8% (2,041) of the staff identified by Auckland DHB as people who may be required to wear an N95 respirator have had an up-to-date objective fit test to a mask with a secure supply chain. We have utilised both a centralised fit-testing program and in-team trainer model to achieve the current level. Fit testing of the remaining staff continues within Directorates via the in-team model with centralised reporting and monitoring of progress.

Counties Manukau District Health Board (as at 15 October 2020)

Counties Manukau Health (CMH) is composed of 8800 (total) employees of whom 3,017 have been mask fit tested. CMH implemented a worst case pandemic scenario approach and tested widely, servicing 34.2% of all staff.

CMH is implementing a Respiratory Protection programme (RPP) that emphasises personal protection as part of a broader programme that involves engineering and work practice solutions. The Respiratory protection used is part of a more complete Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) programme.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic CMH prioritised the risk areas and carried out mass fit testing (and mask education) on the following groups:

- Anaesthetists
- Surgeons
- Theatre and ICU Staff
- Emergency Department Staff
- Staff of potential COVID-19 dedicated wards

The programme is on-going and will be expanded to cover the higher grade of respirator and maintain the RPP on an annual basis as per the New Zealand Standard AS/NZS1715 Selection, use and maintenance of respiratory protective equipment.

The programme has been adapted as necessary to respond to specific challenges related to the pandemic. For example, staff members have been fit tested on the QSI Duckbill N95 mask as well as the 3M 1870 to mitigate potential shortages of 3M products.

You are entitled to seek a review of the response by the Ombudsman under section 28(3) of the Official Information Act. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, or an edited version of this response, may be published on the Auckland DHB website.

Yours faithfully



Ailsa Claire, OBE
Chief Executive of Te Toka Tumai (Auckland District Health Board)