

# **Pre-departure COVID-19 testing for individuals wishing leave New Zealand: Frequently Asked Questions**

An increasing number of countries and some airlines now require passengers to provide evidence of a negative COVID-19 test result before they are able to travel. People who choose to travel can now arrange a pre-departure test through their primary care providers (general practice or GP). Information about pre-departure testing procedures is available [on the Ministry of Health website](#). Additional information on commonly asked questions is below.

## **1. What kind of test is performed in New Zealand?**

All COVID-19 tests performed in New Zealand are nucleic acid amplification tests (NAAT), including Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) tests.

Some laboratories may offer serological (antibody) tests if required, but this is not standard and you would need to enquire about the availability of such tests at the time of booking if this is required for your final destination.

## **2. Where can I book a test?**

Pre-departure tests can be arranged through primary care providers for a fee. Primary care providers (General Practitioners) anywhere in New Zealand can arrange for testing, and individuals should contact their nearest general practice clinic.

Most but not all primary care providers can provide testing. If you're not sure which clinics can provide testing, contact Healthline on 0800 611 116 (24 hours) and ask where the nearest clinic which can provide testing is.

You don't need to be registered at a General Practice to receive a test, although if you are able to be tested at a practice with which you are registered the consultation fee will be lower.

## **3. How much will it cost?**

COVID-19 tests which are required solely for the purpose of travel are available on a fee for service basis. The fee for testing and the processing time may vary depending on the clinic, region, and day of the week the test is conducted – individuals should check with the test provider at the time of booking regarding the fees and estimated processing time for tests conducted at that clinic. As an estimate, the fee for a doctor consultation and test is usually between NZD\$200-\$400.

Please note that for people who suspect they may have been infected with COVID-19, either because they are displaying symptoms or have been in contact with someone who has tested positive, the charge for testing will be met by the New Zealand Government.

#### **4. How accurate are the tests?**

While a negative test result may be reassuring, no test is 100% reliable - and receiving a negative COVID test result does not guarantee a person does not have COVID-19. This is also true of positive test results. If a traveller is displaying symptoms of illness prior to travel, they should immediately call Healthline or contact their GP for advice about both how to stay safe and prevent the spread of COVID-19, and whether to travel at all.

#### **5. What laboratories in New Zealand are licensed to perform COVID-19 tests (PCR) and issue certificates? Are those centres accredited by international organisations or certified by New Zealand government?**

People should ensure that any provider they seek a test from is IANZ accredited. COVID-19 testing in New Zealand is done in laboratories that are audited and accredited by [International Accreditation New Zealand \(IANZ\)](#), the accreditation body of the Testing Laboratory Regulation Council of New Zealand. This organisation undertakes quality assurance of all COVID-19 testing in New Zealand.

#### **6. What form are test results issued in?**

Standard practice in New Zealand is to provide text notification of test results as this is the fastest method of communication. However, GPs can provide a printed hard copy of test results report if required for pre-departure certification purposes. You will need to request this at the time of testing, and it may be emailed to you or provided in hard copy on a return to the clinic.

The information which is included on the test result report can vary depending on the laboratory where the test was processed; New Zealand does not currently have a single certificate, template or format for test report results. Standard information includes patient name, type of test, date of test and test result, as well as the name of the laboratory. Some labs may also include additional information such as patient date of birth or National Health Information number, but this is not standard.

Some countries or airlines require a specific format for the test result (e.g. a letter or certificate), so travellers need to ensure that they are familiar with the requirements for their intended destination. Depending on the destination, travellers may require the document to include the full details of the individual being tested, the type of test and type of equipment being used, etc. Travellers will need to discuss with their test provider what information is required on a hard copy document to ensure that this can be accommodated.

## **6. How can the validity of such test result reports be checked?**

All of the labs performing Covid-19 testing in NZ are IANZ accredited, and their accreditation status can be confirmed on the IANZ website: <https://www.ianz.govt.nz/directory>. IANZ accreditation provides assurance that the laboratory has undertaken regular audits, and meets quality assurance standards.

The GP clinic or medical centre where the test is performed may also provide the results on letterhead with the contact information for the clinic so that they can be verified if needed. However, this is not standard practice, and should be requested by the patient at the time of testing if required.

## **7. Could you please provide addresses of accredited health centres which can provide tests?**

The Ministry of Health does not provide lists of all accredited health centres performing COVID-19 tests, or laboratories which process these tests, as these may change. For the most up to date information on which health centres can perform the test, please contact Healthline on 0800 611 116 (24 hours).

## **8. How long does it take to receive test results?**

It sometimes takes several days for test results to be available, but it could be longer. Further information is available [on the Ministry of Health website](#). Please note that it is not likely in most cases that a hard copy test result will be available within 48 hours, although many requests can be accommodated within 72 hours depending on the testing centre.

The time required to process the test may vary depending on the location of the clinic (e.g. in a large city or small town), and on the day of the week the test is performed. Individuals will need to enquire at the time they arrange the test about the likely time required to receive a test result.

It is important that travellers check the requirements for the country they intend to travel to with regard to the time of testing and ensure that they allow sufficient time before travel to receive the test results. For example, some airlines or countries require a test result that is not more than 72 hours old.

Please note that for travellers transiting through New Zealand on their way to a final destination would not be able to be tested in New Zealand because they remain airside throughout the transit and maximal transit period is 24 hrs.

## **9. Can my Embassy or High Commission provide me with a report?**

No, test result reports can only be provided by registered New Zealand medical practitioners.

In some cases, additional documents may be required for entry to the destination country which have been provided or certified by the Embassy or High Commission. Travellers must check the requirements for carriage, transit and entry to their intended destination before travelling.