



COVID- 19 Alert Level Guidance, August 2021

BreastScreen Aotearoa providers for breast screening at various Government COVID-19 Alert Levels

Provision of breast screening during the COVID-19 pandemic response

Breast screening is an essential preventative service. Breast screening under Government COVID-19 Alert Levels 1, 2 and 3 is considered safe on the proviso of compliance with all Ministry of Health advice regarding ways to limit potential spread of COVID-19.

BSA Providers, including sub-contractors, will also be working under the DHB National Hospital COVID-19 Response Framework. This ensures access to treatment for women who require it. This guidance has been developed to take account of both the Government COVID-19 alert levels and the DHB National Hospital COVID-19 Response Framework. The Lead Provider is responsible for liaising with DHB's in their region to find out the level on the National Hospital Response Framework each DHB is operating at, and to advise subcontractors accordingly.

We expect that priority women will be the most affected by any screening pause and restrictions under the government COVID-19 alert levels. Providers will ensure equity is at the forefront of their strategic planning and operational processes to mitigate this impact.

This document provides guidance to inform provider decisions on screening provision. Providers will also need to consider their local circumstances including the context of their wider organisation and staff.

Refer to Appendix One at the end of this which provides a summary of the expected screening activity depending on the various alert levels.

General requirements for both screening and assessment during the pandemic response

- Procedures are in place to screen women for COVID-19 symptoms and risk prior to appointments. This should be in line with the current Ministry of Health guidance. Women are deferred:
 - who have respiratory symptoms, or
 - where they are required to isolate as:
 - they are awaiting a COVID-19 test result, or
 - they, or their household members, have attended locations of interest (listed on Ministry of Health website), or
 - they have been classified as a contact a COVID-19 case.
- Masks/ face coverings should be worn in accordance with the latest Ministry of Health guidance or legal requirements.
- Women with a pre-existing medical condition are deferred if appropriate at level 2/3 after discussion with the woman.
- Women should be reassured of the safety protocols in place and are given the option to defer if they wish.
- Equity is a key consideration especially for Māori and Pacific women. The invitation strategy should prioritise Māori and Pacific women especially those whose appointments have been impacted by the COVID-19 response (refer to the current BSA Prioritisation Guidance).
- Key messages reinforce that:
 - screening is an essential preventative service
 - the screening programme is safe and COVID-19 risk is minimised
- Providers will have infection control protocols in place taking account of the Ministry of Health and your wider organisation's PPE guidance.
- Support people can accompany women to appointments where appropriate for example if distancing is possible in waiting areas. The support person should be someone from their 'bubble' (if you are in a region with an alert level 3 or 4). However, the support person is not allowed to be in the room for screening or assessment. Hospital alert levels and hospital policies relating to support people will need to be considered for hospital-based sites.
- Additional support: It's important to remember that everyone has different experiences of the pandemic. For some women it may help to speak to a Nurse to talk through what will happen. Screening support services are also operating and can support women as required.

Ensure COVID-19 Tracer QR codes are visible at all fixed and mobile sites.

Appendix One: BreastScreen Aotearoa service availability at different response levels

Pre-requisites	BSA Overview	BSA Screening and Assessment	BSA Assessment and referral to treatment
<p>Govt Alert Level 4 in region</p>	<p>All screening appointments are paused.</p> <p>Women part way through a screening episode have images read and are triaged for likelihood of invasive cancer and assessments offered as required</p>	<p>GOVT ALERT LEVEL 4: LOCKDOWN</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening is paused. • Reading is completed for screening images previously taken. • All women with a recall to assessment result are triaged to determine likelihood of cancer. • Women triaged as M4/5 are offered an assessment as soon as possible. • Women triaged as M2/3 are advised by phone or letter that they need further non urgent investigations and that this is deferred. 	<p>HOSPITAL LEVEL RED</p> <p>Assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M4/5 women are considered urgent and can be offered assessment and referred for treatment. Clips inserted and receptor testing. • Reduced MDM representatives • Clinics need to operate within the requirements of local DHB Alert levels <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p>HOSPITAL RESPONSE LEVEL ORANGE</p> <p>Assessment:</p>
<p>Govt Alert Level 3 in the most of region</p>	<p>Screening can occur at reduced capacity for women without other existing medical conditions of relevance.</p> <p>All women are screened for COVID 19 symptoms prior to appointments.</p> <p>Assessment services according to prioritisation and capacity.</p>	<p>GOVT ALERT LEVEL 3: RESTRICT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening can occur. • Risk assessment on an individual basis will need to be made for women that have aged out (i.e., over 69 years) during any pause on screening and are prioritised for screening. • Mobile screening can occur if staff are available and willing to travel away from home. Mobile screening can be paused if uptake by women makes this inefficient. 	<p>Assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M4/5 women are considered urgent and can be offered assessment and referred for treatment. • Women triaged as M2/3 are advised by phone or letter that they need further non urgent investigations and that this is deferred. • Reduced MDM representatives • Women with M3 who have waited for 6 weeks or more are assessed as capacity allows

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Booking schedules need to accommodate physical distancing in reception and waiting areas, and additional time for cleaning. Throughput is reduced. • Women triaged as M4/5 are offered an assessment. • Women triaged as M2/3 are assessed as capacity allows. If they are unable to be offered an assessment they are advised by phone or letter that they need further non urgent investigations and that this is deferred. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women triaged as M2 who have waited for 12 weeks are assessed as capacity allows • Clinics need to operate within the requirements of local DHB Alert levels <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p style="text-align: center;">HOSPITAL RESPONSE LEVEL YELLOW</p> <p>Assessment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M4/5 women are considered urgent and can be offered assessment and referred for treatment. • M2/3 women are assessed as capacity allows
Govt Alert Level 2 in most of region	Routine screening for women without other existing medical conditions, where a decision to screen should be made on a case-by-case basis.	<p>GOVT ALERT LEVEL 2: REDUCE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Screening occurs • Routine screening for all except for those with other existing medical conditions, where a decision to screen should be made on a case-by-case basis. • Booking schedules need to accommodate physical distancing in reception and waiting areas, additional time for cleaning. Throughput is reduced. 	<p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <p style="text-align: center;">HOSPITAL RESPONSE LEVEL GREEN</p> <p>Assessment: Restore normal services as quickly as possible.</p> <p>Additional clinics scheduled where possible to reduce wait list.</p>
Govt Alert Level 1 in most of region	<p>All usual breast screening activities can occur.</p> <p>Women are prioritised and offered appointments in</p>	<p>GOVT ALERT LEVEL 1: PREPARE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All usual breast screening programme activities can occur. 	

	accordance with the current BSA Prioritisation Guidance.		
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#Triage based on BI-RADS Breast Imaging-Reporting and Data System (American College of Radiology, 2013) risk assessment categories: M0 incomplete; M1 negative; M2 benign; M3 likely benign; M4 suspicious for malignancy; M5 highly suggestive of malignancy.

Appendix Two: See DHB National Hospital COVID-19 Response Framework