

Figure 1: Reported COVID-19 cases in New Zealand (A) and changing COVID-19 pandemic responses strategies (B) during the pandemic. Data source: Ministry of Health (MoH).⁴ The key dates for these strategies are described in Appendix 2.

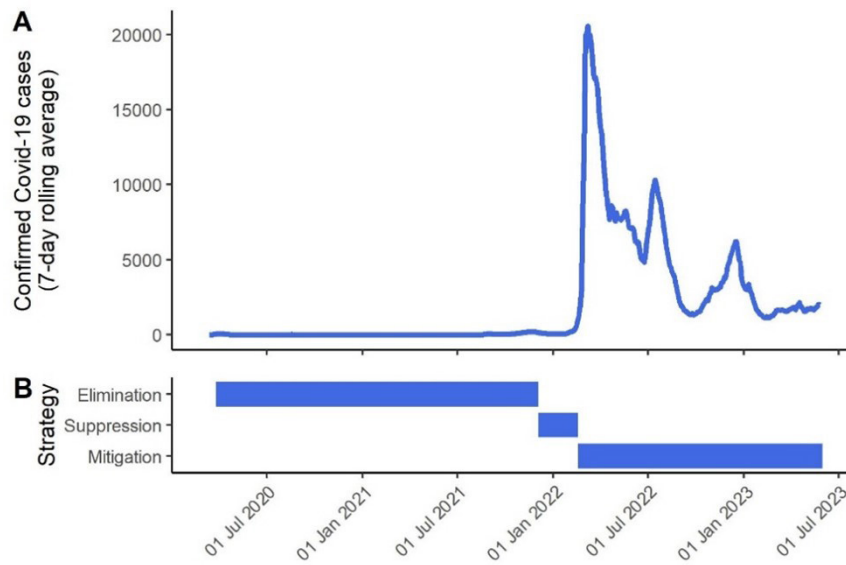


Table 1: Summary of key measures to manage the ongoing threat from COVID-19 and other pandemic diseases, and to improve public health, equity and health security.

Broad area	Key measures
<p>1. Choose and articulate an optimal and equitable response strategy.</p>	<p>Continue an explicit mitigation strategy to minimise the health impact of ongoing COVID-19 transmission.</p> <p>This strategic setting should be reviewed periodically based on new knowledge about the health impacts of COVID-19 and the availability of improved interventions (notably vaccines that can interrupt transmission, which could make suppression or even elimination of infection feasible).</p>
	<p>Ensure appropriate resourcing of Māori leadership (Te Aka Whai Ora) and service delivery by Māori providers. Also ensure continued Pacific community and provider engagement and participation.</p>
<p>2. Develop and implement an integrated respiratory infection strategy to reduce disease burden.</p>	<p>Maintain or improve clear self-isolation guidelines for COVID-19, with the support measures needed to make them effective (e.g., access to testing, sick leave entitlements and test-to-release guidelines).</p> <p>Consider extending these measures to other serious respiratory infections—albeit with further evaluation of the public acceptability and potential improvements in support from government agencies and the role of mandates for reinforcing such behaviours.</p>
	<p>Improve indoor air quality in public settings and evaluate the effectiveness and cost effectiveness of different options.</p>
	<p>Maintain mask use in high-risk indoor environments such as healthcare settings and explore the advantages and disadvantages of mandating masks in public transport settings, particularly over winter.</p>
	<p>Implement strategies to limit transmission in key shared environments like schools and ensure that resources are in place to protect students’ access to education at times of expected high transmission.</p>
<p>3. Achieve and maintain high and equitable vaccine coverage for all at-risk groups.</p>	<p>Continue to refine the COVID-19 vaccination schedule based on best international evidence. Evolve the strategy depending on the type and action of each COVID-19 vaccine.</p>
	<p>Combine the focus on COVID-19 with other national schedule vaccines, particularly with influenza vaccination delivery strategies.</p>
	<p>Increase the focus on equitable vaccination uptake, and community trust and engagement. Continue measures to achieve high and equitable vaccination coverage and evaluate the most effective and cost-effective vaccination promotion interventions.</p>

Table 1 (continued): Summary of key measures to manage the ongoing threat from COVID-19 and other pandemic diseases, and to improve public health, equity and health security.

Broad area	Key measures
4. Enhance health services capacity to manage respiratory infections.	Build on new models for primary healthcare delivery to improve access to essential care, such as telemedicine and provision of testing and vaccination by a wider range of healthcare professionals including pharmacists.
	Review and enhance delivery of essential respiratory infection management tools such as antivirals.
	Review services for optimal management in secondary/tertiary care, and in the community post-discharge to identify improved models of practice for pandemic and endemic respiratory infections.
	Continue to develop and enhance infection protection and control services and systems throughout the healthcare system, notably separating respiratory illness from non-respiratory in primary care presentation, ensuring adequate indoor ventilation and regular mask wearing for frontline services.
5. Improve public communication about respiratory infections.	Establish an effective alert system to communicate public health risk of endemic and pandemic respiratory infections.
	Address wider communication goals of managing mis/disinformation and promoting pro-sociality.
6. Improve surveillance and research to inform our response.	Build an effective national surveillance infrastructure to support management of endemic and pandemic respiratory infections using an optimal mix of integrated methods (including epidemiological, microbiological, genomics, informatics, mathematical modelling, social media information, multiple community narratives) with capacity to be quickly scaled up when needed to support a pandemic response.
	Develop a research agenda to fill key gaps in knowledge about COVID-19 and its management, including better estimates of the current and future health impact of long COVID, selection of cost-effective interventions and identifying ways of improving the equity and sustainability of the response to respiratory infections. It would also be useful to build on successful international collaborative clinical and other research that has accelerated in response to the pandemic.
7. Improve pandemic preparedness nationally and internationally.	Actively support the Royal Commission to identify a highly effective pandemic strategy for New Zealand that is flexible enough to respond to a range of potential pandemic threats beyond the current focus on pandemic influenza. Ongoing scrutiny will be needed to ensure this strategy is sustained, revised and resourced.
	Actively support international efforts to strengthen WHO to deliver a more proactive global response to prevent future pandemics and manage them effectively.
	Work with Australia, South Pacific Island nations and South East Asian nations to strengthen regional pandemic control measures and infectious disease surveillance in general.