



Infection Control, Immunisation and Screening Background Information



Infection Control and Immunisation Information

Infectious diseases can be transferred from one infected person to another and include common viral illnesses which can be a significant cause of lost productivity for a business. New Zealand lost around 9.95 million working days to absence in 2022 (these are COVID 19 influenced statistics). Illness (non-work related) was the most common cause of absence. The direct costs of absence amounted to \$2.86 billion across the economy in 2022.

Why is it Important?

According to the 2023 Workplace Wellness Report, New Zealanders are most likely to be absent from work due to illness, the second most common reason to take sick leave is caring for a family member or other dependent due to illness.

Promoting good infection control measures and immunisation within your workplace can prevent a wide range of infectious diseases. Correct hand hygiene in the workplace is a key measure to help staff avoid contracting and spreading infectious diseases.

Encourage staff to keep themselves and their families up to date with immunisations. National campaigns are currently being run to encourage New Zealanders to be vaccinated against covid-19, measles, whooping cough (pertussis) and influenza.

Workplaces can play a key role in supporting our national vaccination campaigns. We encourage all businesses to support their workers to access vaccination without workers facing costs or disadvantage.

Facts

According to the 2023 Workplace Wellness Report the average rate of absence in 2022 was 5.5 days per employee, up from 4.7 in 2020.

Key Messages

Encourage staff to:

- Stay at home if they are unwell.
- Wash and dry their hands.
- Get their COVID-19 and influenza vaccinations.

Reliable resources can be found below:

- [Ministry of Health](#)
- Ministry of Health [Covid Vaccines](#)
- Ministry of Health [Influenza Vaccines](#)
- Ministry of Health [Whooping Cough Vaccines](#)
- Ministry of Health [Measles Vaccine](#)
- Health Ed [Hand Washing and Immunisation resources](#)

Screening Information

Cancer is a major cause of premature death in New Zealand, with cancer diagnoses set to increase from 25,700 in 2015-19 to 45,100 a year by 2040-44 (a 2.3% increase per annum). This could impact on



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workplaces absenteeism rates. In 2022, New Zealand lost around 9.95 million working days to absence. Illness (non-work related) was the most common cause. The direct costs of absence amounted to \$2.86 billion across the economy [in 2022](#).

Why is it important?

Screening looks for cancer risk factors such as the Human Papillomavirus (HPV), and signs of cancer such as blood in the bowel. Screening applies to people who do not have symptoms. It helps spot cancer risk factors at an early stage, helping to reduce the risk of disease, and increase the chance of detecting cancer early.

The likely benefits for promoting screening in the workplace include:

- Improved staff health and reduced sick leave.
- Decreased risk of early death or early retirement due to cancer related illness.
- Having a caring and supportive workplace culture.

Bowel Screening Facts

The National Bowel Screening Programme is free for everyone aged 60 to 74 years. It is offered every two years. Bowel cancer often has no symptoms and the programme aims to save lives by finding bowel cancer at an early stage.

[Bowel screening programme \(info.health.nz\)](#)

Cervical Screening Facts

Regular cervical screening is one of the best protections against cervical cancer. The National Cervical Screening programme is available for women

aged 25 to 69 years. While the programme is not fully funded, some people are [eligible for free](#) cervical screening. Follow up testing is free for everyone regardless of their eligibility for free routine screening.

[Cervical screening \(info.health.nz\)](#)

Breast Screening Facts

The Breast Screening programme is free for [eligible](#) women aged 45 to 69. Regular mammograms can find 80-90% of cancers and can reduce the risk of dying from breast cancer by more than a third. For people who are eligible, free mammograms are offered every 2 years. It is still important for people to [check their breasts](#) when they are under 45 or over 69.

[Breast screening \(info.health.nz\)](#)

How can your workplace support bowel, cervical and breast cancer screening?

- Hold information sessions and/or have promotional material in the workplace about the importance of screening. Promotion can be for those at the age of eligibility, and/or for those with relatives eligible.
- Share promotional material about the signs and symptoms of bowel, cervical and breast cancer and what people should do if they have these.
- Get involved with (fundraising or supporting) and promote national screening awareness campaigns.
- Invite local screening providers and experts to talk about the importance of screening.



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- Resources and pamphlets can be found on Health Ed under “[National Screening Programmes](#)”

Key messages

- An important thing that someone can do for their health is to screen regularly.
- The likely benefits for promoting screening in the workplace include improved staff health and reduced sick leave.
- Providing support to screen through education and awareness can increase screening rates.