

Media Release

Issued: 22 February 2023

Te Whatu Ora funding primary healthcare delivery in affected regions

Te Whatu Ora – Health New Zealand is helping people impacted by Cyclone Gabrielle to get easier access to healthcare by funding a range of primary care initiatives across pharmacies, clinical telehealth and general practices.

Abbe Anderson, National Director, Commissioning says: “Helping people access primary healthcare and advice without cost is our top priority for those who are in impacted areas, or who have been displaced due to the Cyclone.

“We are hearing directly from providers, communities and whānau and responding to their needs. We know that this experience has impacted whānau and communities differently and so our local response will also look different depending on your situation and where you are located.”

Funded initiatives:

- To make getting medicines easier, people won't have to pay for their prescription charge at pharmacies in Northland, Tairāwhiti, Hawke's Bay and Tararua. In the rest of New Zealand, there is no prescription charge at pharmacies for those who have been displaced and unable to return to Northland, Tairāwhiti, Hawke's Bay and Tararua. Te Whatu Ora will cover these costs.
- We have worked with Medsafe to extend the medicines emergency supply provisions of the Medicines Regulations 1984. This means pharmacists can supply up to 14-days of medicines without a prescription for people in the affected areas or displaced from an affected area. Emergency supplies can be made from a pharmacy in Northland, Waitemātā, Auckland, Counties Manukau, Bay of Plenty, Waikato, Lakes, Tairāwhiti, Hawke's Bay, MidCentral and Tararua (note applies only to pharmacies in Fielding, Dannevirke and Pahiatua).
- Te Whatu Ora is working alongside providers to address workforce pressures by getting locum GPs and nursing staff into general practices and rural hospitals that have been impacted. Provision of locum Lead Maternity Carers (LMC) to support LMCs, and pharmacists affected by the floods, along with relief Locums are being sent into the Tairāwhiti and Hawke's Bay regions.
- Te Whatu Ora has expanded access to free phone consultations through Healthline for those affected by the cyclone. People can connect directly with a GP and may also be able to get new prescriptions if required through this service – call Healthline on 0800 611 116.
- In the Hawke's Bay, in response to the needs identified by the local community, Te Whatu Ora is providing funding for free general practice, and medical and urgent care visits from now until 19 March 2023. We will closely monitor the situation and decide if an extension is required.

ENDS

Media contact:

h.nzmedia@health.govt.nz

Note to editors:**Cyclone support: available health services****Primary Care**

- General practices who are at capacity or unable to operate due to the Cyclone, will have systems in place to refer patients (both enrolled and non-enrolled) to a funded 24/7 clinical telehealth service where they can access a doctor.
- A number of other virtual clinical care options are also being funded to support people in impacted areas.
- Funded visits to general practice, accident and medical, and urgent care are available in Hawke's Bay from now until 19 March 2023. Te Whatu Ora will closely monitor the situation and decide if an extension is required.

Pharmacies

- Te Whatu Ora is making getting your medicines easier. The service available to you depends on your situation and where you are located.
- People in Northland, Tairāwhiti, Tararua and Hawke's Bay don't need to pay a prescription charge when picking up medicines from pharmacies. People who have been displaced or are unable to return to Hawke's Bay, Tairāwhiti, Tararua or Northland don't need to pay a prescription charge when picking up medicines from pharmacies.
- A pharmacist can provide up to 14 days' supply of medicines without a prescription in specific parts of the country. Things to note:
 - If you can't get a new prescription from your usual prescriber (general practice) you can get 14 days' supply from a pharmacy in most cases.
 - You need to be taking the medicines already. If you need a new medicine, you will need a prescription, you can either get this by contacting your general practice or Healthline 0800 611 116.
 - If you have a list of your medicines (eg, a prescription receipt, a hospital 'yellow card', or a list from Manage My Health) take it with you to the pharmacy.
 - If you have them, it can also be useful to show the pharmacists the medicine bottles or boxes of the medicines you normally take.
 - Not all medicines are available by an emergency supply. Your pharmacist will advise you if you need a prescription for any of your medicines.

Telehealth – Healthline 0800 611 116

- Call Healthline 0800 611 116 anytime day or night for free health advice.
- Speak to nurses, paramedics, advisors, and doctors for trusted health advice and information.
- Doctors can provide consultations if you are unable to access a GP or are not enrolled, answer questions about your medication and help with prescriptions over the phone.
- You can call Healthline for free from anywhere in Aotearoa and the team will help you.

Telehealth – Mental Health and Wellbeing Support 1737

- Extreme weather events such as these are very distressing and can have a significant impact on our mental wellbeing.

- It's normal to feel stressed or anxious during times of extreme difficulty. Some people may find this time much harder than others.
- Call or text 1737 anytime to talk with a counsellor for support, advice, and ideas to help right now.

Telehealth – Disability Helpline 0800 111213 or text 8988

- A person with experience or knowledge of disability will answer your call from 8am to 8pm to connect you with information and support. After 8pm, calls are answered by a trained member of the Healthline team.
- For assistance, access using the NZ Relay Service www.nzrelay.co.nz
- This helpline was originally established as a dedicated COVID Disability Helpline but is also able to help with any general health concerns.