

8 November 2021

AJ Sheppard

By email: fyi-request-17393-e22e0db9@requests.fyi.org.nz
Ref: H202115236

Tēnā koe AJ

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) on 29 October 2021 for information regarding COVID-19 deaths.

Each part of your request is responded to below:

*As of 29/10/2021 there are 28 recorded covid deaths in nz.
Were all of the 28 deaths tested for covid 19?*

Yes, as of 29 October 2021, there are 28 recorded COVID-19 deaths in New Zealand. We will only be providing information for the first 26 deaths. 25 of the cases recorded as having died from COVID-19 were tested.

Did all 28 deaths return a positive pcr test for covid 19? If not please provide a breakdown of positive result, negative result and no test done.

Five people who are reported to have died from COVID-19 did not have laboratory confirmation. Four probable cases were tested, but all swabs were negative. One probable case was never tested. The remaining cases returned positive PCR test results. The remaining 23 cases tested positive.

How long prior to each of the victims deaths were they tested?

The information you have requested is attached to this letter as Document 1 for the first 21 laboratory confirmed COVID-19 cases, as the other 5 cases are probable.

How many of the 28 covid deaths underwent autopsy to confirm cause of death?

The Ministry does not hold this information. This information will be held by the hospitals conducting the treatment. You may wish to seek information held by the specific public health unit. Their details can be found at: www.health.govt.nz/new-zealand-health-system/key-health-sector-organisations-and-people/public-health-units/public-health-unit-contacts.

Who signs off/confirms the cause of death due to covid 19?

After a person dies, the certificate of cause of death is completed by the medical or nurse practitioner who was responsible for their care during their final illness. When a person is suspected to have a COVID-19 infection, a laboratory test is done to confirm the presence of the virus. When the person with a confirmed COVID-19 infection is unwell, the clinician assesses the patient's acute condition and considers their medical history including any chronic conditions and medications the patient was taking before they became ill, as those will need to be treated as well as COVID-19.

The cause of death is determined from an assessment of the patient's clinical condition at the time of death. If the patient never recovered from the acute severe respiratory syndrome caused by COVID-19, the cause of death will be the infection from COVID-19. If any other pre-existing conditions were considered by the clinician to have contributed to the patient succumbing to the COVID-19 infection, then those conditions are documented on the certificate of cause of death as other significant conditions that contributed to the death. If the patient died from a complication of COVID 19 infection, then the complication will be documented as the primary cause of death, and the COVID-19 infection will be entered as a factor giving rise to the primary cause of death.

If a person recovers from a COVID-19 infection and then dies days or weeks later from exacerbation of a different (pre-existing) condition, the medical or nurse practitioner will assess the person's clinical condition at time of death and complete the certificate of cause of death in line with that assessment. It is likely the acute exacerbation of the pre-existing condition will be entered as the cause of death. If the COVID-19 infection was thought to have contributed to the person's declining health from that other condition, then the COVID-19 infection will be entered as a significant condition that contributed to the death.

Guidance for certifying deaths from or with COVID-19 has been on the COVID-19 'Information for health practitioners' section of the Ministry's website since early in the COVID-19 pandemic at:

- www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-information-health-professionals/recording-covid-19
- www.health.govt.nz/our-work/regulation-health-and-disability-system/burial-and-cremation-act-1964/completing-death-documents/covid-19-deaths

There are also occasions when an attending medical or nurse practitioner is required to report a death to the coroner under the Coroners Act 2006. There is more information about these criteria at: www.health.govt.nz/our-work/regulation-health-and-disability-system/burial-and-cremation-act-1964/referring-death-coroner.

Were any of the 28 victims already hospitalized for other illness/treatment at the time of infection or death?

Has any one person signed of on or officially confirmed cause of death due to covid more for more then one patient?

The Ministry does not hold this information. This information will be held by the hospitals conducting the treatment. You may wish to seek information held by the specific public health unit. Their details can be found at: www.health.govt.nz/new-zealand-health-system/key-health-sector-organisations-and-people/public-health-units/public-health-unit-contacts.

Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or by calling 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry website at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, sweeping initial 'N' followed by a series of connected loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Nick Allan
Manager OIA Services
Office of the Director-General

The number of days between COVID-19 testing and death

Case number	Days between test and death
1	4
2	3
3	1
4	13
5	0
6	3
7	9
8	4
9	22
10	11
11	12
12	15
13	12
14	21
15	9
16	11
17	40
18	23
19	23
20	29
21	7

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