

98% of New Zealanders to access in-person urgent care within one hour’s drive of their homes

What’s happening and why

- Getting care quickly is key to better urgent care health outcomes for people.
- Access to urgent care services can vary depending on location, and some people face long wait times or drives to get care.
- New and improved services will be introduced, giving New Zealanders faster, more convenient access to urgent care services.
- These will be phased in over the next two years to match service readiness and workforce availability.



What’s rolling out when

- 2025
- Lower Hutt’s after-hours urgent care service hours will be expanded to build on the existing after-hours service to operate during the day, to meet growing community needs.

- 2026
- Improved services will start being rolled out across rural and remote communities in areas like Masterton, Dannevirke, Mahia and Raetihi.

- 2027
- A new 24/7 urgent care service in Palmerston North easing pressure on the local ED.
 - Up to 19 Central region communities will benefit from improved services.

Why it matters
Benefits for your family



- More care available closer to home
- More health tests done locally
- More medicines available locally
- Extended evening and weekend urgent care options
- 24-hour on-call clinical support
- More convenient healthcare with reduced need to go to ED or travel long distances for prescriptions and non-life-threatening health conditions

Better resources for health services
Benefits for health professionals



- Rural clinicians paid to be on-call for improved service locations
- Access to more diagnostic tests so clinics can provide more treatment locally
- Less pressure on local EDs
- Strengthened primary care teams through expanded digital health and smarter of other health professionals’ skills

What’s new
Key improvements



- New 24/7 urgent care service in Palmerston North
- New daytime service for Lower Hutt
- 24/7 on-call clinicians for rural and remote communities
- More key diagnostic tests, equipment and common medicines available locally
- 24/7 online GP consultations (separately funded)
- Primary care, urgent care and emergency ambulance services collaborate to make better collective use of the skills and resources they have

Lower Hutt – Urban

It’s 10am Monday morning. Tama’s 1 year-old son has developed a fever, a rash and has just started vomiting. Tama can now take him to the city’s urgent care clinic, avoiding Hutt Hospital’s busy ED.

Pahiatua – Remote

It’s Friday night and Mary thinks she has a urinary tract infection. She gets an online GP appointment within 15 minutes and is prescribed an antibiotic. Instead of a long drive to a pharmacy the next morning, she picks up the medicine at a depot 20 minutes from her home.

Waipawa – Rural

It’s Sunday morning and Kate has severe abdominal pain. She calls Ka Ora digital health for an online consult. The GP recommends an in-person assessment from the new on-call service. Kate travels to the local clinic where she is met by the on-call clinician and given an ultrasound which rules out a serious condition. She heads home with pain relief, having avoided the need for a 45 minute ambulance ride to Hawkes Bay Hospital and a wait in an ED.



Case studies