



Leave Payment Scheme

The COVID-19 Leave Payment Scheme is financial support for people who should self-isolate but might be deterred because of financial reasons.

Self-isolation is crucial to delaying and slowing the spread of COVID-19. It is important that the barriers and impacts of self-isolation, especially loss of income are reduced.

The COVID-19 Leave Payment Scheme is designed to help people who should self-isolate, but otherwise might be deterred because of financial reasons.

Workers shouldn't attend work when they should be self-isolating, just because they cannot afford to stay at home. Nor should workers lose their livelihoods by staying at home.

How the scheme works

The scheme is open to all workers in all firms, sectors, and regions, sole-traders and the self-employed where the need to self-isolate or recover from COVID-19 prevents a person from working. Payments will be \$585.50 per worker per week for full-time workers and \$350 per worker per week for part-time workers.

Employers will apply to the Ministry of Social Development for the subsidy on behalf of workers, and are required to pass on the full weekly amount. Where employers are already paying their staff, nothing in this scheme will require an employer to pay a worker more than that worker would have received had they worked. In such cases, however, employers will still be eligible to receive the leave payment. Self-employed people will apply for themselves and receive the subsidy.

The entitlement covers the 14 days for workers who self-isolate in accordance with public health guidance and for the entire period of sickness for workers who contract COVID-19.

As people may be required to self-isolate more than once, employers will be able to apply for this at any time that the worker is in self-isolation (and meets the broader criteria).

Self-isolation

The scheme only covers self-isolation under public health guidelines. The guidelines state that a person is required to self-isolate if:

- you arrived in New Zealand after 1:00 am on Monday 16 March from any country (except those listed on the countries and areas of concern under Category 2) you will need to self-isolate for 14 days
- People who have recently travelled from Category 2 countries and territories should be aware of the COVID-19 symptoms. You do not have to self-isolate if you are well. Anyone who develops symptoms within 14 days of departing the Category 2 country and territory should contact Healthline (0800 358 5453).
- you arrived in New Zealand before 1:00 am on Monday 16 March from China, Iran, Italy or South Korea you need to self-isolate for 14 days from the day you left that country.
- you have been in close contact with someone confirmed with COVID-19 you will need to self-isolate for 14 days from the date of contact.

Other leave entitlements

The COVID-19 Leave Payment Scheme does not impact on an employee's leave entitlements.

Employers are required under the current law to pay any employee who is sick (or caring for a sick dependent) until their paid sick leave is used up. Similarly, if the employee is using annual leave, employers are required to continue paying the employee. Payment for leave is at the rate the employee would have expected to receive had they worked.

We recommend employers provide paid special leave beyond this period, or when workers are self-isolating. Where workers are able to work from home, employers must pay the worker as normal.

Who is eligible

Under this scheme, anyone who loses their regular income due to self-isolation will still receive a payment, whether they work for a big or small company, in one sector or another, or if they are self-employed. All people legally working in New Zealand are eligible for the scheme.

The entitlement is only available where the worker isn't able to work from home. If a worker does not feel sick and is willing and able to work from home, the worker can offer to work from home in agreement with their employer. In this circumstance, they will be paid normally.

Those who leave to travel overseas after 16 March, 2020 will not be eligible for this payment for self-isolation on their return.

How to apply

Apply for the COVID-19 Leave Payment – Work and Income

<https://workandincome.govt.nz/products/a-z-benefits/covid-19-support.html>

Privacy information for employees – Ministry of Social Development [PDF 475KB](external link)

Please note that this is general advice only and will vary for each specific situation. In addition, this continues to be an evolving situation. For specific and current advice relating to your unique situation, please get in touch with an expert from our employment team.