

# New Zealand to enter lockdown after single virus case found

August 17 2021, by Nick Perry

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Shoppers lineup to enter a supermarket in Auckland, New Zealand, Tuesday, Aug. 17, 2021. New Zealand's government took drastic action Tuesday by putting the entire nation into a strict lockdown after detecting just a single community case of the coronavirus. Credit: Brett Phibbs/New Zealand Herald via AP

New Zealand's government took drastic action Tuesday by putting the entire nation into a strict lockdown for at least three days after finding a single case of coronavirus infection in the community.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern invoked some of the stirring rhetoric she used early in the pandemic by urging the "team of 5 million"—New Zealand's population—to go hard and early in trying to eliminate the latest outbreak.

"We have seen what happens elsewhere if we fail to get on top of it," Ardern said. "We only get one chance."

She said Auckland, where the infected man lives, and Coromandel, where he had visited, would go into a full lockdown for seven days and the remainder of the country for three days while health experts tried to find the source of his infection.

The developments prompted people to line up outside supermarkets to stock up on essential items and sparked a sharp drop in the value of the New Zealand dollar.

New Zealand had managed to stamp out the virus, and the last outbreak was in February. But Ardern had been warning that the contagiousness of the delta variant would likely require more drastic action than previous outbreaks.

New Zealand has also been slower than other developed nations to inoculate its population, leaving it vulnerable to outbreaks. Only 32% of people have had at least one shot and 18% are fully vaccinated.



Supermarket staff help a customer with her shopping in Auckland, New Zealand, Tuesday, Aug. 17, 2021. New Zealand's government took drastic action Tuesday by putting the entire nation into a strict lockdown after detecting just a single community case of the coronavirus. Credit: Hayden Woodward/New Zealand Herald via AP

And officials have been viewing a growing outbreak in nearby Sydney with alarm, saying they don't want to make the same mistakes by waiting too long to impose strict measures.

Health officials said genome testing would not verify until Wednesday whether the infected 58-year-old man had the delta variant, although they were working under the assumption he does.



Officials said they could not immediately find a connection between the man and the handful of people who have tested positive while isolating in quarantine after arriving from abroad. The border is seen as the most likely source of any outbreaks.

The move into the strictest lockdown underscored the vastly different approach New Zealand has taken to the virus than most other nations, which are attempting to suppress its spread rather than eliminate it entirely.



Shoppers lineup to enter a supermarket in Auckland, New Zealand, Tuesday, Aug. 17, 2021. New Zealand's government took drastic action Tuesday by putting the entire nation into a strict lockdown after detecting just a single community case of the coronavirus. Credit: Jason Oxenham/New Zealand Herald via AP

New Zealand has reported just 26 virus deaths since the pandemic began.

The lockdown takes effect from just before midnight Tuesday. It requires people to remain at home and avoid others. Most people can leave only to buy groceries or exercise. The nation's vaccination program had been accelerating but has been suspended for two days due to the outbreak.

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