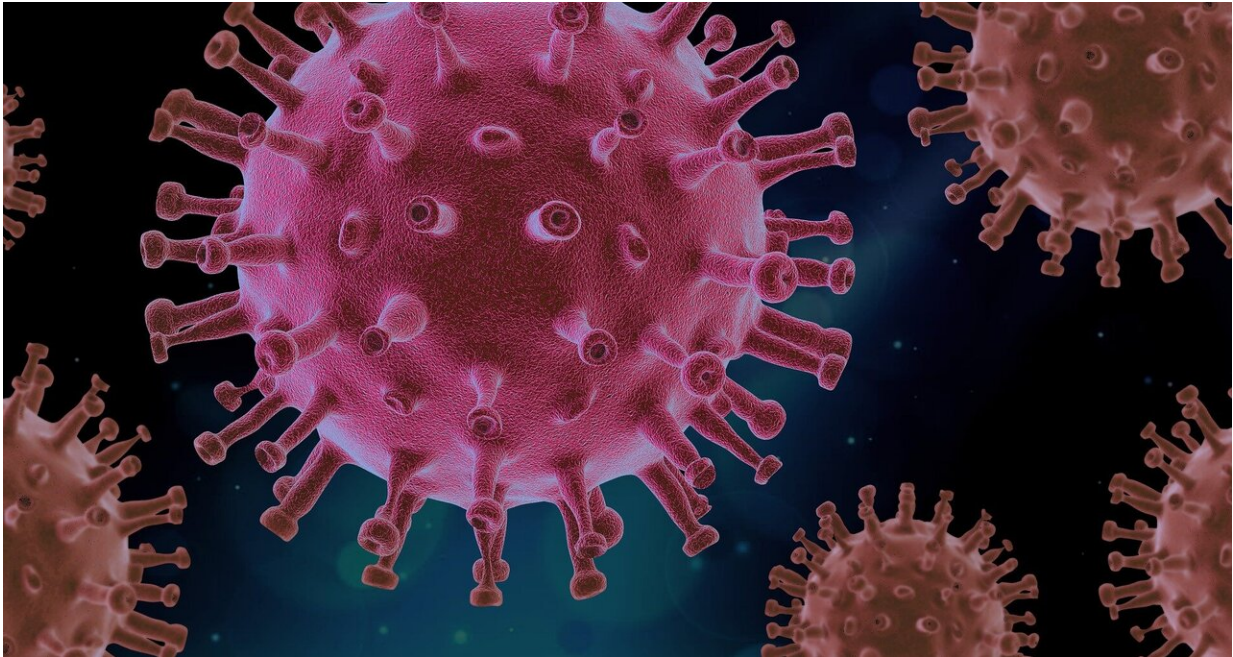


Auckland extends COVID-19 lockdown

September 20 2021



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New Zealand's largest city Auckland will remain in a COVID-19 lockdown for at least another two weeks, although some restrictions will be eased, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said Monday.

Ardern said the [city](#) of two million would move down to level three on New Zealand's four-tier coronavirus response system by late Tuesday, even as authorities remain committed to eliminating a Delta-variant outbreak.

"We're moving now because the advice we have is that we do not have widespread, undetected transmission in Auckland," she told reporters.

"If everyone continues to play their part, we can continue stamping out (the virus)."

The change means stay-at-home orders will remain in place but some businesses, such as [takeaway food outlets](#), can open using contactless delivery.

New Zealand imposed a nationwide [lockdown](#) on August 17 when the first case of the highly transmissible Delta variant was found in the community.

The cluster has been concentrated in Auckland and the rest of the country moved out of lockdown earlier this month.

Ardern said the North Island city could do the same when authorities were confident the outbreak was "well contained".

"At the moment, we continue to see mystery cases cropping up through community testing," she said.

"We want to see a turnaround in some of these situations."

New Zealand is pursuing a "COVID zero" elimination strategy—which has resulted in just 27 deaths in a population of five million.

The country had been free of community cases for six months before the August outbreak, with residents enjoying a near-normal domestic life alongside tight restrictions on international borders.

Citation: Auckland extends COVID-19 lockdown (2021, September 20) retrieved 18 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2021-09-auckland-covid-lockdown.html>

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