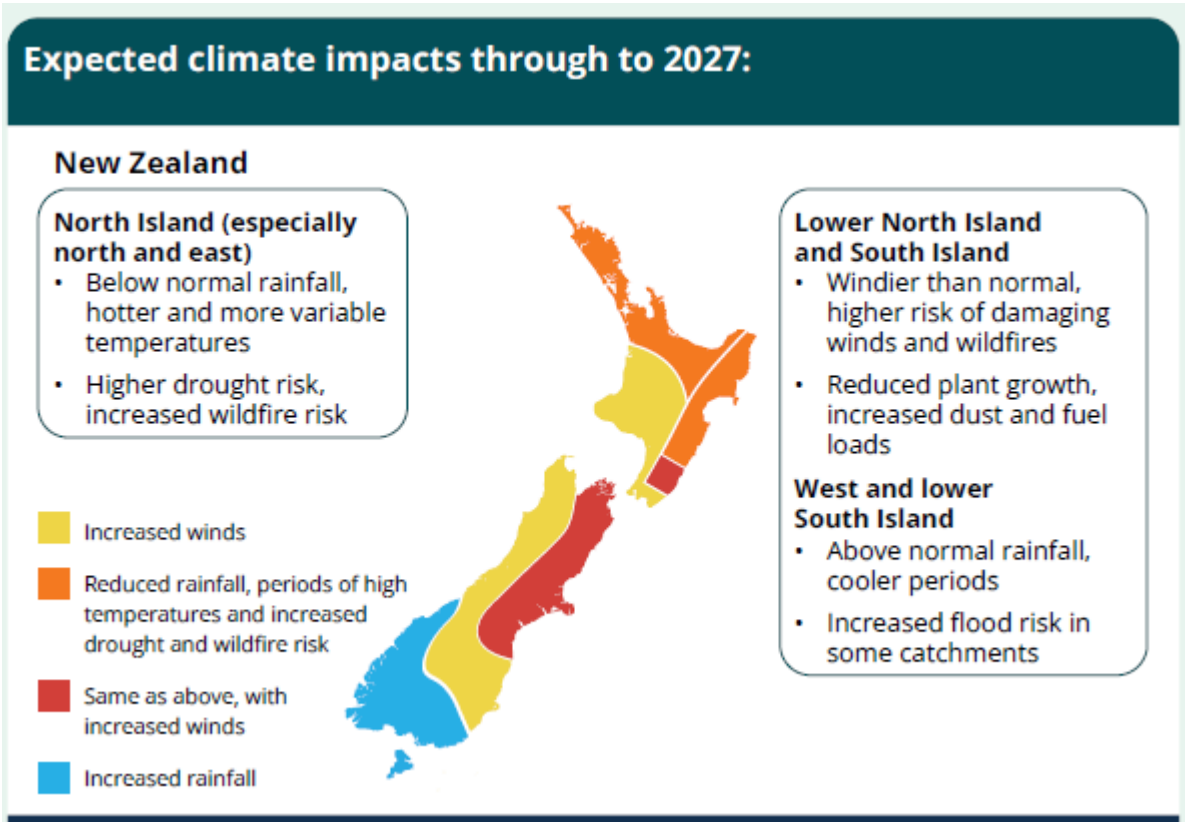
Health New Zealand
Te Whatu Ora

Event	El Niño 2026/27
Notified by	Clinical Team, Protection, NPHS
Authorised by	Dr Susan Jack, National Clinical Director, Protection, NPHS
To	Chief Medical Officers, Hospital Specialists, NPHS national and regional services, Office of the Director of Public Health (Manatū Hauora), Primary Care, Prevention Immunisations, Pharmacy, NZMN, Laboratory Services, NZ College of Midwives, Occupational Health, IPC; Aged Residential Care providers, Plunket providers, Infrastructure HSS providers

A very strong El Niño event has been forecast for 2026/27. This may have significant climate impacts and potential health and health service impacts for Aotearoa New Zealand.

Summary

- El Niño is a natural climate pattern that can influence our weather and environments.
- A very strong El Niño is expected to affect Aotearoa New Zealand through spring and summer 2026 and into 2027. This can increase the chance of more frequent and extreme weather events.
- Public health risks could include heat waves and extreme heat; drought and drinking water shortages; wildfires and smoke; storms and flooding; and strong wind.
- These risks vary across the motu. The image below shows the expected outlook for different areas.



Source: National Readiness Forum 2026

Key messages for healthcare professionals

- El Niño-related climate events might impact the availability and accessibility of health services, and the demand for those services, for staff, patients and others.
- Taking the time to prepare for these events can help to limit their impact. Get to know your organisation's emergency plans and visit Get Ready for advice tailored to households, workplaces, schools, and marae.

Key actions for healthcare professionals

- Some people may be more at risk from the adverse health impacts of weather events than others. This includes:
    - People who are younger, older, pregnant or disabled;
    - People with long-term health conditions;
    - People who are socially isolated or live in remote areas;
    - People who work outdoors or in hot environments;
    - People who live in housing that is hard to keep cool; and
    - People who live in drought- and flood-prone areas.
- Consider how El Niño conditions may affect your patients' access or need for health services. Some people may need assistance with preparations e.g. back-up supplies of regular medicines; telehealth consultations; at-home equipment; options if limited access to their usual services.
- Get to know your organisation's Heat Health Plan or advocate for your workplace to prepare one, using Health New Zealand's guidelines.

Further information

These resources are live – bookmark them so you can easily check for updates.

Information about El Niño:

- El Niño - Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora
- El Niño 2026: What you need to know – Earth Sciences New Zealand | Te Whatu Ao

Preparation advice:

- For households, workplaces, schools and marae:
  Get Ready – National Emergency Management Agency | Te Rākau Whakamarumaru
- For farmers, growers and lifestyle block owners:
  Preparing for El Niño - Ministry for Primary Industries | Manatū Ahu Matua
- Check your Local Council website for local advice.

National Public Health Service Community Resource Pack:

- Internal Health NZ link: El Niño NPHS Community Resource Pack
- External link (PDF): El Niño 2026/27 National Public Health Service Community Resource Pack – HealthEd
- Editable version (PowerPoint):
  https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/c8ub5qi1blb6gs5iz9ogm/AE2aFDwcYJ76iI4asnQsX8c?rlkey=xjbn5o3iitpdv3vquvk86wjmg&st=30pxy6fn&dl=0

Heat health advice:

- Guidelines for creating organisational Heat Health Plans - Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora
- Heat management guidance for managers (PDF)

Food safety advice:

- Resources for food safety promotion are available here: Food safety resources and Summer food safety - Ministry for Primary Industries | Manatū Ahu Matua