

# COVID-19 Vaccine FAQ

## Why should I be vaccinated?

The main purpose of getting the vaccine is to protect you from COVID-19 and help reduce the risk of passing it on to your family and community.

## Will there be a cost to the vaccine?

No. There is no cost for the COVID-19 vaccine. It is free to everyone and anyone in New Zealand.

## Do I have to get the vaccine?

The vaccine is an added protection for you and your family against COVID-19 and we encourage you to get the vaccine when the vaccine is offered to you. But, it is not compulsory.

## Who can get the vaccine?

The vaccine is currently available to everyone that is living in New Zealand who is 16 years old and over.

That is not because there is any known risk to children and young people from the vaccine; it is just because people under the age of 16 haven't been included in the safety trials so far.

Those under the age of 16 years old have the lowest risk from COVID-19 so we are focusing on the adult population.

## **If I am a border or MIQ worker, will everyone in my household be able to get vaccinated?**

Yes. The vaccine is currently available to anyone that is living in your home who is 16 years and over. Also, if you or a family member regularly stays with another family, you should both discuss vaccination options together so that everyone is protected.

## **Can overstayers be vaccinated without their details being shared with immigration?**

Everyone in New Zealand can get a free COVID-19 vaccination. It doesn't matter what visa you are on or if you're a New Zealand citizen.

We will not share your information with Immigration New Zealand.

## Safety and effectiveness

### Is the vaccine safe?

COVID-19 vaccine will not be used in New Zealand until it has been thoroughly checked and approved by Medsafe. Medsafe is New Zealand's medicines safety authority. They do robust assessment on all vaccines to make sure they meet both local and international standards for quality and safety.

All COVID-19 vaccines will go through the same safety test and must meet the same robust standards. We will also continue to receive data from large, ongoing clinical trials, enabling us to monitor the safety and effectiveness of the vaccines right through the initial roll-out and into their ongoing use.

### Is the vaccine safe for the elderly?

Yes. There are no safety concerns around giving COVID-19 vaccine to older and frail adults.

### Will one COVID-19 vaccine be effective against all the different variants we are seeing?

The Ministry of Health is evaluating data from other countries around how effective the vaccine is against new strains. Some companies may make changes to the vaccine to make sure they work properly – like the regular changes made to the influenza (flu) vaccine.

## How long will the vaccine protect me? Do I need to get a shot every year?

There is work happening around the world to better understand how long a vaccine can give you immunity from COVID-19. Because the clinical trials haven't been going long enough, it's too early to tell. We expect to know more about this in the coming months.

## Are there any people who should not receive the vaccine for medical reasons?

There are very few people who should not have the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccination. People with a history of anaphylaxis to any component of the vaccine (the ingredients), or to the initial dose of the vaccination should not be vaccinated.

If you have any questions or concerns, it's best to talk with your family doctor, nurse or your vaccinator about your medical history before you get your vaccination.

## What are the side effects of the vaccine?

The most common side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine are:

- pain at the injection site
- headaches
- feeling a bit tired or fatigued.

These reactions are common, are usually mild and don't last long, and won't stop you from having a second dose or going about your everyday life.

You'll be asked to wait at least 20 minutes after your vaccination so medical staff can check you don't have a serious reaction. Our vaccinators are well trained to manage any adverse reaction.

## Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe for pregnant women and breastfeeding?

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, please talk to your vaccinator, family doctor or your midwife.

## Vaccine delivery

### How do I receive the COVID-19 vaccine?

The COVID-19 vaccine is given as an injection in your arm.

You'll need two doses at least three weeks apart. To make sure you have the best protection, you'll need to get both doses of the vaccine. If you can't make your appointment for the second dose, reschedule as soon as possible.

### What if you can't get the second dose?

You need two doses of the vaccine at least three weeks apart to get the best protection. If you can't make your appointment to get the second dose, please get in touch with the people making your bookings. They'll make another time for you to be vaccinated as soon as possible.

### How will the COVID-19 vaccine affect the measles, mumps and rubella (MMR) and influenza vaccines?

The Ministry is considering advice from experts in the field around the timing of COVID-19 vaccines and other vaccines.

COVID-19 vaccines cannot be administered within:

- two weeks of an influenza vaccine, or
- four weeks of any other vaccine, for example, the Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) vaccination.

Having a gap between two different vaccinations makes it easier to judge which vaccine may be responsible for any adverse events. This approach is important because the COVID-19 vaccines are new.

## **Will the vaccination be made available to communities in rural areas?**

Yes. The vaccine will be made available throughout all communities in Aotearoa New Zealand.

## **What support is available for people with disabilities?**

We are working with disability networks to understand the specific challenges that receiving the COVID-19 vaccination might mean for the disabled community. This includes both those living with disabilities and those who provide support services to people living with disabilities. Their needs will be incorporated into our vaccination planning. We are also working with the disabled community to make sure key information is available in a range of accessible formats.

## **Will my decision to be vaccinated or not vaccinated be confidential and not shared with other agencies?**

Your privacy and consent are extremely important. Your vaccination can only go ahead with your consent. No information can be shared without your permission.

Border and MIQ workers will be asked for their permission to let their employer know they have been vaccinated. This can only happen with the worker's permission and is only to help employers meet the health and safety needs of their staff and their workplace.

## Employment

### Will I get time off work to get vaccinated?

We encourage you to talk with your employer so you can plan your appointment schedule together. That way, your appointment can happen during your normal working day.

### Can employers legally ask employees to get vaccinated?

If you work in a job that is subject to a Required Testing Order, you are strongly encouraged to get vaccinated. This not only helps to protect you, it also protects your workmates and the people you live with.

But, vaccination is not compulsory – you do not have to have the vaccine.

### Do I need to tell my employer if I get vaccinated or not?

Only border and MIQ workers are being asked for their permission to allow our Ministry of Health to pass on confirmation that they have been vaccinated. This is to help border and MIQ employers meet the health and safety needs of their staff and their workforce.

## Community Engagement

### Will the information and resources be translated into the Pacific languages?

There are some resources and key information that has already been translated into Pacific languages. This is available on the Ministry of Health's [website](#) and the Ministry for Pacific Peoples [website](#). There are more resources being developed, and they will be translated too. Further Pacific translations are likely to be added as well.

### Will there be any regional fono for the community to talanoa about the vaccination?

Yes. Ministry for Pacific Peoples with the Ministry of Health will host a fono across different regions of New Zealand as well as nine ethnic specific Pacific language fono. The fono will be held in the evenings. These fono allow the communities to talanoa and ask questions in their preferred Pacific language.

### Will there be community outreach vaccination services for older Pacific people? (eg, in church settings)

We anticipate that there will be vaccination outreach opportunities available in your communities, including for older Pacific people.

### Will the Pacific church and community leaders be involved to help reach and inform the Pacific community?

Yes. The Ministry for Pacific Peoples and the Ministry of Health greatly value the support and advice from the Pacific church and community leaders about informing and mobilising the community to be immunised. The National Pacific Zoom Fono is one way of involving the leaders. Regional fono are being held across NZ in the different Pacific languages for more talanoa. For more information contact [rsvp@mpp.govt.nz](mailto:rsvp@mpp.govt.nz)

## Information Support

### Who can I speak to for more information?

For more information, you can contact Healthline on 0800 358 5453. You can always also talk to your family doctor or nurse.

### Where can I get accurate information?

Getting the right information matters. Please beware of incorrect information on social media and other places. You should only share information from official sources.

You can get accurate and trusted information at [www.covid19.govt.nz](http://www.covid19.govt.nz) and [www.health.govt.nz/covid-vaccine](http://www.health.govt.nz/covid-vaccine) or talk with your family doctor.