

COVID-19 Vaccination Frequently Asked Questions

(taken from <https://vaccinatecanterburywestcoast.nz/>)

How does the COVID-19 vaccine work?

<https://covid.immune.org.nz/covid-19-vaccines-nz/comirnaty-mrna-pfizerbiontech-vaccine/how-comirnaty-vaccine-works-and>

Can my 12-15 year-old child get vaccinated at my vaccination appointment?

- When parents or guardians book their COVID-19 vaccine, they can also book in a vaccination for any 12–15-year olds in their whānau.
- We **cannot** accommodate anyone without a booking.
- Bookings can be made by visiting www.BookMyVaccine.nz or by calling 0800 28 29 26 (8am-8pm, 7 days a week).

I'm not a New Zealand citizen or resident, can I get vaccinated?

Yes, everyone in New Zealand can get free COVID-19 vaccinations regardless of citizenship or visa status.

I'm not enrolled with a doctor or general practice in New Zealand and don't have an National Health Index (NHI) number, can I get vaccinated?

Yes, you can get vaccinated. Having a health number (National Health Index or NHI) is not a requirement for booking or getting vaccinated.

What vaccine is available in New Zealand and how does it work?

- New Zealand has secured enough doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine (Comirnaty) to vaccinate everyone in the country.
- The Pfizer vaccine will not give you COVID-19. The COVID-19 vaccine works by triggering your immune system to produce antibodies and blood cells that work against the COVID-19 virus.
- Getting a COVID-19 vaccine is an important step you can take to protect yourself from the effects of the virus.
- You'll need two doses, at least three to six weeks apart. To ensure you have the best protection, make sure you get both doses of the vaccine.

Do I have to get vaccinated?

COVID-19 vaccination is free and voluntary. However, we strongly encourage everyone who is eligible for a vaccination to get one – getting vaccinated is the best way to protect you, your kaumātua and whanau, and your community. The more people who are vaccinated, the safer our community will be.

I am pregnant or breastfeeding – is it safe for me to get the Pfizer vaccine?

- If you're pregnant, we encourage you to get a COVID-19 vaccine as part of Group 3 at any stage of your pregnancy. This is because people who are pregnant can become very sick if they get COVID-19 infection.
- Evidence from the large number of pregnant people who have already been vaccinated globally, indicates that there are no safety concerns with administering COVID-19 vaccines at any stage of pregnancy.
- Vaccinating during pregnancy may also be helpful for the baby, as there is evidence of antibody transfer in cord blood and breast milk, which may offer protection to infants through passive immunity.
- If you have any questions or concerns, discuss them with your healthcare professional.

Are there any risks I need to be aware of?

- COVID-19 vaccines used in New Zealand must comply with international and local standards for quality, safety and effectiveness.
- Like all medicines, COVID-19 vaccines may cause side effects in some people. This is the body's normal response and shows the vaccine is working.

Once vaccinated, will I be protected against COVID-19?

Yes. The data is clear that the vaccines protect individuals from the effects of the virus. However, it is still possible for some people who have been vaccinated (approximately 1 in 10) to transmit the virus to someone else.

Do I need to continue being careful with hygiene and infection risk after I have been vaccinated?

- Once you've been vaccinated, continue to take precautions to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Thoroughly wash and dry your hands. Cough or sneeze into your elbow and stay home if you feel unwell. This will help you protect yourself, your whānau and others.
- Continue using the COVID tracer app, turn on your phone's Bluetooth function, and you may wish to wear a face covering or mask.

Does the vaccine prevent me from transmitting the virus to others?

The vaccine appears to provide substantial protection against virus transmission, however, it is possible for some people who have been vaccinated (approximately 1 in 10) to transmit the virus to someone else. Maintaining good hygiene practices, staying at home if you are sick and getting tested if required are as important as ever.

What are the side effects of COVID-19 vaccines?

Like all medicines, COVID-19 vaccines may cause side effects in some people. This is the body's normal response and shows the vaccine is working.

Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine (Comirnaty)

The most common reported reactions are:

- pain at the injection site
- a headache
- feeling tired or fatigued
- muscle aches
- feeling generally unwell
- chills
- fever
- joint pain
- nausea

These are usually mild and won't stop you from having the second dose or going about your daily life.

What should I do if I experience side effects or an adverse reaction to the vaccine?

- If you have an unexpected reaction to your COVID-19 vaccination, your vaccinator or health professional should report it to the Centre for Adverse Reactions Monitoring (CARM).
- You can also report any unexpected reactions by using their online reporting form on the CARM website: otago.ac.nz/carm
- If you are unsure about your symptoms or they get worse, talk to your GP or call [Healthline](https://www.healthline.co.nz) on 0800 358 5453.
- If you have an immediate concern about your safety, call 111 and make sure you tell them you've had a COVID-19 vaccination so that they can assess you properly.

Visit <https://covid19.govt.nz/covid-19-vaccines/> for more info and latest updates.

Be a Doer! Karawhiua - Protecting whānau is what we do - <https://karawhiua.nz/>