

26 October 2021

By email: [REDACTED]
Ref: H202114730

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act), which was transferred from the Office of Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister for COVID-19 Response, to the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) on 20 October 2021. I shall respond to each part of your request in turn.

Before responding to your request, I want to acknowledge the difficult health issues you have dealt with in your life and your care for your children. Given your medical history, you have raised several concerns about vaccination. While the Ministry is unable to provide medical advice, I recommend you discuss your concerns with your general practitioner as they are best placed to respond to them and advise you.

Vaccines, however, are the most powerful tool we have to protect New Zealanders from the virus, with research showing that vaccination helps reduce transmission. The known risks of COVID-19 illness and its related, possibly severe complications, such as long-term health problems, hospitalisation, and even death, far outweigh the potential risks of having a rare adverse reaction to vaccination. This is why it is so important every eligible New Zealander has the opportunity to be vaccinated, as it protects not only the individual from COVID-19, but vulnerable members of our community who cannot get vaccinated.

Maximising vaccination uptake is critical to the reopening of Aotearoa New Zealand and will reduce the impact of serious illness and disease in our whānau, communities and health system. Building our health system's readiness so it can sustainably manage COVID-19 over the longer term is another significant priority. The Ministry's Health System Readiness Programme coordinates work across the country's health system to ensure there are sustainable plans to manage any recurring resurgences of COVID-19 in community and hospital settings, as well as service delivery in primary and community care settings.

I will now turn to your specific questions.

- 1. By getting the vaccine will this make me less likely to pass Covid to someone else, what is the proven evidence that this is the case?*
- 2. If I was working in a room with a vaccinated teacher (me being unvaccinated), what is the likelihood of me getting and transmitting Covid in comparison to the vaccinated teacher?*

3. Can you explain to me exactly how by me getting the vaccine, it will stop me getting it and passing it on to someone else?

Preliminary results from studies carried out by researchers have shown that two doses of the Pfizer vaccine can substantially reduce transmission of the virus:

www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/science_updates_7_may_2021.pdf.

However, more data is required to understand the extent of the effect that vaccination has on transmission of the Delta variant. A summary of currently available data can be found at:

www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/science-briefs/fully-vaccinated-people.html.

The New Zealand Immunisation Handbook also provides references to scientific studies conducted regarding COVID-19 and the vaccine:

www.health.govt.nz/our-work/immunisation-handbook-2020/5-coronavirus-disease-covid-19

Medsafe, New Zealand's Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Authority, also publishes up to date information regarding the Comirnaty vaccine, including its clinical efficacy and safety:

www.medsafe.govt.nz/profs/PUArticles/June2021/Spotlight-on-Comirnaty-vaccine.html.

The following links may also be useful to you:

- Information regarding the approval process of the vaccine can be found at: www.medsafe.govt.nz/COVID-19/vaccine-approval-process.asp
- Information regarding the efficacy and safety of the vaccine can be found at: www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/about-covid-19/covid-19-about-delta-variant
- The Ministry also regularly updates the Science News page for up to date information regarding COVID-19 and the vaccine at: www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-resources-and-tools/covid-19-science-news.

4. Taking my age into consideration, what is the likely risk of fatality should I be unfortunate to contract Covid, what is the likelihood of recovery?

The risk of fatality after COVID-19 infection is dependent upon many factors. In particular, a person's age and any underlying conditions such as kidney, heart and severe lung disease and the ability of the health system to respond to cases.

The number of cases of COVID-19 reported worldwide on the 6 September 2021 was 221,558,109 with 4,581,963 deaths. Giving a mortality rate of slightly more than two percent. Compared to a person aged 20-39, a person who is 85 years or older has a risk which is 600 times higher. Vaccination markedly reduces the risk of becoming ill or dying from COVID-19. There is more information about COVID-19 cases worldwide at reputable websites including:

- The World Health Organization: <https://covid19.who.int/>
- University of Oxford/Our World in Data: <https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus-data#>

5. If I was to get Covid, would I then have natural immunity to it?

Information can be found at the following link: www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-vaccines/covid-19-how-vaccine-works#doses.

This notes that, "after the second dose, the antibody levels were higher than those seen after the first dose, and higher than those seen after natural infection."

6. Are any of the contents in the vaccine toxic to my body?

The vaccine is not toxic. The full list of ingredients can be found here at point 2:

www.medsafe.govt.nz/profs/Datasheet/c/comirnatyinj.pdf.

There is further information on the Ministry website at:

www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-vaccines/covid-19-how-vaccine-works#ingredients

7. Can you confirm whether this vaccine is mRNA gene altering?

The vaccine is not experimental mRNA gene altering therapy. There is more information about how mRNA vaccines work at:

www.medsafe.govt.nz/COVID-19/mRNA-vaccines.asp.

8. How long has the trial period of this vaccine been? How have the long-term effects been studied and determined?

The vaccine is not experimental. It has been granted provisional consent by Medsafe under section 23 of the Medicines Act 1981. Please refer to the approval process page on the Medsafe website here for further information:

<https://www.medsafe.govt.nz/COVID-19/vaccine-approval-process.asp>.

It is not unusual for companies to run clinical trials for approved vaccines. There are lots of approved medicines that have ongoing trials for new indications.

Information regarding how the vaccines were developed and how the vaccines are monitored is available on the Ministry website:

www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-vaccines/covid-19-vaccine-clinical-trials-and-testing.

9. How long does this vaccine last? Will I need to get booster shots, and if so, what are the long-term effects of ongoing usage of the vaccine?

Information regarding booster shots is still under active consideration and therefore withheld under section 9(2)(f)(iv) of the Act, to maintain the constitutional conventions that protect the confidentiality of advice tendered by Ministers and officials.

10. Could this vaccine cause blood clots and haemorrhaging, especially of those with pre-existing conditions?

Information regarding side effects can be found at:

www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-vaccines/covid-19-vaccine-side-effects-and-reactions.

Like all medicines, the vaccine may cause side effects in some people, although they are usually mild and do not last long. As I noted above, I recommend you discuss your specific concerns with your general practitioner.

People who have been vaccinated for COVID-19 are asked to wait for 15 minutes so medical staff can check there is no serious allergic reaction, just like any other vaccination you might receive.

The Centre for Adverse Reactions Monitoring (CARM) at the University of Otago works with Medsafe to monitor the safety of all medicines (including vaccines) in New Zealand and reporting events helps us to make sure that the benefits of taking a medicine outweigh the risk of harm.

11. If I was to have a serious reaction, whether it be immediate or one that occurs as a long-term effect, would the government be liable, considering that if there was an option that didn't impact me providing for my family I would not consent to the vaccination. Would the government pay for medical expenses and provide for my family, look after my two children?

12. If I decide that the risk of the vaccine is too great, where do I go from there? How will I be able to financially provide for my family?

As New Zealand operates a no-fault accident compensation system, there is no requirement to indemnify employers and/or healthcare providers. The Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) provides assistance and cover in these situations:

www.covid.immune.org.nz/faq/will-acc-provide-cover-covid-19-vaccination-injuries.

Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at:

info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or by calling 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Ministry of Health website at:

www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases.

Nāku noa, nā



Nick Allan
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