

9 November 2021

[REDACTED]

By email: [REDACTED]
Ref: H202114944

Tēnā koe [REDACTED]

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) to the Ministry of Health (the Ministry) on 25 October 2021 for information regarding COVID-19.

You specifically requested:

What is the chance of surviving covid 19 by age group if healthy and with no comorbidities?

The risk of fatality after COVID-19 is dependent upon many factors. In particular, a person's age and underlying conditions such as kidney disease, heart disease and severe lung disease. The number of cases of COVID-19 reported worldwide on the 6 September was 221,558,109 with 4,581,963. Giving a mortality rate of just over 2%. 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.

Has the covid 19 aka SARS-CoV-2 virus virus been purified and isolated directly from a sample taken from a covid diseased patient, where the patient sample was NOT first combined with any other source of genetic material. To clarify I am requesting evidence showing Isolation of the SARS-CoV-2 virus in human beings in your possession as this would have been integral in the crafting of the Covid19 Public Health Response Act here In New Zealand.

The Ministry does not hold any information relating to your request. Therefore, your request is refused under section 18(g)(i) as the information requested is not held by the Ministry and there are no grounds for believing it is held by another agency subject to the Act.

The Ministry does not conduct scientific research or studies. Please refer to online scientific studies for further information: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>.

You may be interested in reading a response that has also been previously published on the Ministry website at the following address: www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/information-release/h202100116_2_feb_2021_covid_virus_isolation.pdf. This shows that the virus has been isolated.

What are all the adverse effects that one could get from the covid vaccines?

A full list of adverse effects is publicly available here: www.medsafe.govt.nz/COVID-19/vaccine-report-overview.asp

Does the covid vaccine stop transmission of covid from one person to another?

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 on the [US CDC science brief page](#).

The Coronavirus Immunisation handbook 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 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 here: www.medsafe.govt.nz/COVID-19/vaccine-approval-process.asp
- Information regarding the efficacy and safety of the vaccine can be found here: 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: www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-resources-and-tools/covid-19-science-news.

More studies and research regarding the vaccine can be found on PubMed here: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/> and the New England Journal of Medicine here: <https://www.nejm.org/coronavirus>.

Does the covid vaccine stop you from getting covid if you are vaccinated?

Vaccines are a critical aspect of the package of measures to reduce the risk of COVID-19. It is expected to reduce overall infection rate and the incidence of symptomatic disease, and therefore the risk of onward transmission within our communities.

The following link provides information on vaccine effectiveness and other health measures: 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 is that vaccination reduces transmission and the severity of COVID if infected.

Please refer to the vaccination stats that reinforce this: www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-data-and-statistics/covid-19-case-demographics#age-gender.

These statistics show that the majority of the people who are infected with COVID-19 and/or in hospital are unvaccinated.

Are any ingredients in the pfizer vaccine being kept secret? (patented)

No all ingredients are in the datasheet here:

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

What compensation is provided to those who die or face ongoing medical conditions and unable to work after the covid vaccine?

Is there any financial cover from any deterioration in medical health within a 20 year timeframe following the covid vaccine without having to prove the vaccine as the cause of said deterioration? (it is inherently difficult to prove a decline in health was due to the covid vaccine)

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.

What alternative existing treatment options are there for covid?

As COVID-19 is a viral illness, there is no specific treatment. Most people who develop COVID-19 will recover fully while isolating at home or in managed isolation and quarantine and they do not require hospitalisation. Supportive treatment with fluid, rest, and antifever medication is useful in aiding recovery and can be successfully managed by a general practitioner (GP). A GP is best placed to provide care for those who are recovering from COVID-19 at home, as they are familiar with underlying conditions that may impact recovery and can manage these appropriately.

For patients who are hospitalised with serious cases of COVID-19, there is currently one Medsafe approved medication which is dexamethasone. It is an anti-inflammatory medication that is indicated in the treatment of COVID-19 for patients who require supplemental oxygen therapy. You can find the Medsafe datasheet for the approved medicine here: www.medsafe.govt.nz/profs/Datasheet/d/Dexmethsonetab.pdf.

Medical practitioners are permitted to use any medicine for a particular patient in their care at their discretion; however, unapproved medicines have not been evaluated by Medsafe for safety and efficacy. If your healthcare professional chose to prescribe other agents to treat a patient with COVID-19 it would be their responsibility to ensure that they are aware of any safety issues and that they communicate the risks and benefits to their patients. See www.medsafe.govt.nz/COVID-19/medicine-approval-process.asp.

The Ministry of Health is aware that therapeutics will have a role to play in managing the pandemic for people who are not vaccinated. Medicines and other ways to treat and manage patients who have COVID-19 are being continually developed and researched. You can find more information on COVID-19 treatments on the Ministry of Health website here: www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/about-covid-19.

The Ministry of Health does not conduct the treatment of patients, therefore cannot provide guidance regarding the treatment protocols that is in the hospitals, general practitioners or district health boards.

Which immunity is longer lasting natural immunity or vaccine immunity?

Once a person is infected with SARS-CoV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19), their immune system kicks in and produces an immune response to the virus. This response is made up of different components, including proteins called antibodies. Antibodies are produced by the

immune system to fight foreign organisms and substances that the body perceives as a threat, such as viruses. The antibodies can remember what the virus looks like, which means that they can quickly spot and target the virus if it is encountered again. The immune system then destroys the targeted virus.

This process is similar to what happens when our body encounters other common viruses, such as influenza. While our body can produce an immune response to SARS-CoV-2 infection, it is not yet known how long this immunity lasts. Initial research has indicated that antibody responses can last for several months in some people.

COVID-19 is a new disease, so there is no existing immunity in our community. This means that COVID-19 could spread widely and quickly.

Further information about immunity is available here: www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-health-advice-public/about-covid-19/covid-19-what-we-know-about-infection-and-immunity.

What size particle is the covid virus?

This information is publicly available here: www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7579175/

What size particles do the cloth and disposable facemasks that most of the general public wearing in NZ actually filter out?

Do facemasks stop covid virus transmission and which type do?

What are all the health effects from breathing in one's toxins and carbon dioxide when wearing a facemask?

Please note the Ministry of Health does not conduct scientific research or studies. Please refer to online scientific studies for further information: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/>.

The Ministry constantly reviews international studies and evidence on mask wearing in the community setting. Our current advice aligns with that of the World Health Organization (WHO): [www.who.int/publications/i/item/advice-on-the-use-of-masks-in-the-community-during-home-care-and-in-healthcare-settings-in-the-context-of-the-novel-coronavirus-\(2019-ncov\)-outbreak](http://www.who.int/publications/i/item/advice-on-the-use-of-masks-in-the-community-during-home-care-and-in-healthcare-settings-in-the-context-of-the-novel-coronavirus-(2019-ncov)-outbreak).

As part of reviewing international evidence, the Ministry considers other advice from international organisations including Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, Public Health England, the European Centre for Disease Control and Prevention, Australian jurisdictions and a range of scientific and medical journals.

The information is collated through Ministry specialist technical advisory groups whose membership include a variety of expert professions such as infection prevention and control, public health, infectious diseases, microbiology and primary care. When reviewing evidence, we ensure it is applicable to the current New Zealand situation and can be applied in our context.

Please refer to the below previously released responses regarding masks:

- www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/information-release/h202006250_20_oct_2020.pdf.
- www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/information-release/h202008732_15_dec_2020_0.pdf.

Can the covid virus be spread through the eyes and skin?

The virus has been detected in tears and conjunctival swab specimens from individuals with COVID-19. If someone rubs their eyes and then touches someone else or touches a surface, that kind of transmission mechanism could occur.

These droplets carrying SARS-CoV-2 can enter your body through the mucous membranes (wet parts) of your face – your eyes, nose and mouth – which provide a direct pathway to your throat and lungs. The good news is that it can't get in through other parts of your body like your skin or your hair, but you might be surprised just how easily it can get to the mucous membranes of your face.

*Does one need to be showing cold and flu symptoms in order to transmit covid virus?
What evidence and proof do you have that healthy unvaccinated people who have no cold and flu symptoms actually can transmit the covid virus?*

Infected people can transmit the virus whether or not they have symptoms.

People mainly transmit COVID-19 when they have symptoms. But people can also spread it just before they develop symptoms when they are near other people for longer periods of time.

For further information on transmission from the World Health Organization is available here: www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/question-and-answers-hub/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-how-is-it-transmitted

How many people have died from the flu each year since 2015

This information is publicly available here: <https://minhealthnz.shinyapps.io/mortality-web-tool/>. Follow the link in the right-hand corner of the page to open the web tool. Other published mortality data is on this page: www.health.govt.nz/nz-health-statistics/health-statistics-and-data-sets/mortality-data-and-stats.

For more recent data, there is approximately a 6–8 week lag between a death occurring and the fact of this death appearing in Ministry of Health data. The earliest fact of death information is available online from the Stats NZ COVID 19 data portal here: www.stats.govt.nz/experimental/covid-19-data-portal. This shows trends in the numbers of deaths in New Zealand over time, but does not give cause of death.

After the Ministry receives fact of death information, there is a 6–18-month process to assign a cause of death code for most deaths. The Ministry's clinical coding team reviews the death certificate and health history of the deceased, to assign cause of death codes. Any death which requires a coronial inquiry can take 2-3 or more years for cause of death to be assigned. We do not make mortality data available publicly until the majority of deaths have been assigned a cause of death, so that the data we release is complete and accurate.

The Ministry publishes preliminary mortality statistics, which do not include injury-related deaths information which are typically more influenced by coronial cases, in December each year. The 2019 preliminary data will be published in December 2021.

I trust this information fulfils your request. 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 website at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Nick Allan', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Nick Allan
Manager, OIA Services
Office of the Director-General