

Why I need a booster

While two doses are likely to provide a good degree of protection against severe disease from Delta and Omicron COVID-19 variants for some time, a booster dose is likely to offer greater protection.

Current evidence shows your protection against infection after the primary vaccination course decreases over time. Giving a 'top up' vaccine after a primary course helps boost your immunity against COVID-19.

What vaccine is being used for boosters

The Pfizer vaccine is the preferred vaccine being used in New Zealand for boosters, regardless of what vaccine was used for earlier doses.

For some people the Novavax vaccine may be more suitable as a booster. More information about them can be found at:

covid19.govt.nz/covid-19-vaccines.

Pregnancy

It is recommended that pregnant people aged 18 and older receive a booster dose of the Pfizer vaccine to help protect them and their baby against the effects of COVID-19. The booster vaccine can be given at any stage of pregnancy at least 3 months after the primary course (for most people, this is two doses).

Pregnant people should discuss the timing of their booster with their midwife, obstetrician or general practitioner.

Booster safety

Medsafe's experts only grant consent for a vaccine to be used in New Zealand/Aotearoa once they are satisfied it has passed required levels of safety and effectiveness. Both vaccines have been used successfully by millions worldwide.

Medsafe will continue to monitor the Pfizer and Novavax for:

- the overall safety profile of the vaccine
- any reported reactions (the frequency, the severity, and any previously unknown reactions)
- the effectiveness of the vaccine overall and in certain groups.
- Potential side effects of Pfizer and Novavax booster vaccines.



Your COVID-19 vaccination

Everything you need to know about the PFIZER and NOVAVAX BOOSTERS

Potential side effects of Pfizer booster vaccine

How I might feel

You may experience some side effects, similar to those you might've had after the first or second dose, such as muscle aches, pain at the injection site or headaches. For most people these are mild effects.

They are a sign your body's immune system is learning to fight the virus. They don't last long and for many people do not impact on day-to-day activities.

Rare side effects

Allergic reactions

There are some side effects that are more serious but rare, like a severe allergic reaction or anaphylaxis. This is the reason people are observed for around 15 minutes post vaccination. Vaccinators are well trained in managing these reactions if they occur.

Myocarditis and Pericarditis

Myocarditis is inflammation of the heart muscle, while pericarditis is inflammation of the tissue forming a sac around the heart. These conditions are usually caused by viral infections (including COVID-19), but they are also very rare and serious side effects of the Pfizer and Novavax vaccines.

Symptoms of myocarditis or pericarditis linked to the vaccine generally appear within a few days, and mostly within the first few weeks after having the vaccine. If you get any of these new symptoms after your vaccination, you should seek prompt medical help.

- tightness, heaviness, discomfort or pain in your chest or neck
- difficulty breathing or catching your breath
- feeling faint or dizzy or light-headed
- fluttering, racing or pounding heart, or feeling like it is 'skipping beats'.

Children are less likely to have these sorts of side effects but may not volunteer symptoms. Caregivers should ask children how they are feeling. There will be no charge for the consultation:

You can also call **Healthline** on **0800 358 5453** anytime to get advice.

If you have an immediate concern about your safety, call **111**, and make sure you tell them you've had a COVID-19 vaccination, or have or had COVID-19 so they can assess you properly.

You can report any side effects you experience at:
report.vaccine.covid19.govt.nz

Getting a booster

You will be able to get a booster dose the same way you got vaccinated with your primary course. For most people, a primary course is two doses. For people who are severely immunocompromised, a primary course could be three doses.

When you arrive for your booster, the date of your last dose will be checked in the booking system to ensure there is the correct gap between doses for your age group since you completed the primary course.

You can check when you are due for a booster, or if you are eligible by visiting mycovidrecord.nz or if you have one, referring to your purple COVID-19 Vaccine Record Card.

To book an appointment for your booster go to: BookMyVaccine.nz

You can also get a booster at a walk-in clinic, pharmacy or your GP.

If you're unable to book online, you can call the **COVID-19 Vaccination Healthline** on **0800 28 29 26** (8am to 8pm, 7 days a week). We'll make the booking for you and answer any questions. Interpretation services, and text, email and NZ Relay options for deaf and hearing impaired are available if you need them. There is also a specialist team for disabled people (**option 2** on the **0800 number**).

