

Getting your COVID-19 vaccine: What to expect

Vaccines are one of the ways we can fight the COVID-19 pandemic and protect the welfare and wellbeing of our communities.

Protection

COVID-19 vaccines are free and available to everyone 12 years and over in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Vaccines protect your health and prevent disease by working with your body's natural defences so you are ready to fight the virus, if you are exposed.

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.

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 to use the NZ COVID Tracer app to scan QR codes to record your visits, turn on Bluetooth tracing, and you may wish to wear a face covering or mask.

How do we know it's safe?

The Pfizer vaccine has been thoroughly assessed for safety by our own Medsafe experts.

Medsafe only grants consent for using a vaccine in Aotearoa, New Zealand, once they're satisfied it has met strict standards for safety, efficacy and quality.

This is the same process used to assess other medicines, like the flu vaccine.

There have been no shortcuts taken in granting approval.

The Pfizer vaccine has been used successfully by millions worldwide.

It continues to be monitored for safety.

Pfizer vaccine

This vaccine will not give you COVID-19. You'll need two doses, at least three weeks apart. To ensure you have the best protection, make sure you get both doses of the vaccine.

If you can't make your appointment, reschedule as soon as possible.

Things to consider before getting your vaccine

If you have had a severe or immediate allergic reaction to any vaccine or injection in the past, please discuss this with your vaccinator.

If you are on blood-thinning medications or have a bleeding disorder, please let your vaccinator know.

We are not currently offering the Pfizer vaccine to those under 12 years of age.

If you have symptoms of COVID-19, get a test and stay at home until you get your results. You can be vaccinated once you have a negative test.

New Zealand Government

Unite
against
COVID-19



What happens after my vaccine?

You'll need to wait at least 15 minutes after your vaccination so medical staff can check you do not have a serious allergic reaction.

You may need to be observed for longer if you have had severe reactions to vaccines or other products in the past, or have a long way to travel after your vaccination.

Potential side effects

Like all medicines, you might experience some mild side effects 1–2 days after getting your vaccination. This is common, and a sign that your body is learning to fight the virus.

Most side effects do not last long, and will not stop you from having a second dose or going about your daily life. Some side effects may temporarily affect your ability to drive or use machinery.

The most common reported reactions are:

- pain or swelling at the injection site
- feeling tired or fatigued
- headache
- muscle aches
- chills
- joint pain
- fever
- redness at the injection site
- nausea

Some side effects are more common after the second dose.

There are some side effects that are more serious but very rare, like a severe allergic reaction or an inflammation of the heart. If you develop difficulty breathing, a racing heart, chest pain or feel faint immediately or in the days after the vaccine, you should seek medical attention.

Further support and information

If you experience symptoms that could be COVID-19 related, such as a new cough, a high temperature/fever or a loss or change in your normal sense of taste or smell, stay home and get a COVID-19 test.

If you are unsure about your symptoms or if they get worse, call **Healthline** 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.

Post Vaccine Symptom Check

You might receive a text message after your COVID-19 vaccination appointment asking about your health following vaccination. Participation in the survey is optional and you can opt out at any time. You can respond to the text for free.

Further information about the Post Vaccine Symptom Check can be found online at: medsafe.govt.nz/COVID-safety-reporting



Getting the right information matters.

Be aware of incorrect information on social media and other places.

You can get accurate and trusted information at:

- [Covid19.govt.nz/get-the-facts](https://covid19.govt.nz/get-the-facts)
- [Health.govt.nz/covid-vaccine](https://health.govt.nz/covid-vaccine)
- [Karawhiua.nz](https://karawhiua.nz)

or talk with your doctor.

To make or change an appointment go to [BookMyVaccine.nz](https://bookmyvaccine.nz) or call the COVID Vaccination Healthline on **0800 28 29 26** (8am–8pm, 7 days a week)