

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 5 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 vaccine cannot 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.

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.

How do we know it's safe?

The Pfizer and Novavax vaccines have 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. COVID-19 vaccines are held to the same standards as all other vaccines before they are approved for use. There have been no shortcuts taken in granting approval. Both vaccines have been used successfully by millions worldwide. They continue to be monitored for safety.

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.

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.

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 myocarditis (an inflammation of the heart) or pericarditis (inflammation of the tissue forming a sac around the heart).

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.

Symptoms of myocarditis and pericarditis include:

- 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.



If you feel any of these symptoms in the days or weeks after the vaccine, you should see a doctor. You can also call Healthline on **0800 358 5453** anytime to get advice.

If you have an immediate concern, 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

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-report/

Getting the right information matters

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

You can get accurate and trusted information at:

- Call the **COVID Vaccination Healthline** on **0800 28 29 26** (8am–8pm, 7 days a week). Covid19.govt.nz
- Health.govt.nz/covid-vaccine
- Karawhiua.nz
- or talk with your doctor.

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