

# 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 in 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. However, we don't yet know if it will stop you from catching and passing on 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 using the COVID tracer app, turn on your phone's Bluetooth function, and you may wish to wear a face covering or mask.

## Safety

Medsafe only grants consent for a vaccine to be used in New Zealand once they are satisfied it's safe and effective enough to use. All COVID-19 vaccines will go through the same safety test and must meet the same robust standards.

## Pfizer vaccine

This vaccine will not give you COVID-19. You'll need two doses, 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.

If you are pregnant or breastfeeding, please talk to your vaccinator, GP or midwife.

Unite  
against  
COVID-19

New Zealand Government



If you are receiving the cancer drugs Keytruda, Opdivo, Yervoy, or Tecentriq, talk with your specialist about whether you should receive the vaccine.

We are not currently offering the Pfizer vaccine to those under 16 years of age until further data is available.

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 30 minutes after your vaccination so medical staff can check you do not have a serious allergic reaction.

## Potential side effects

The most common reported reactions are pain at the injection site, a headache and feeling tired or fatigued.

Muscle aches, feeling generally unwell, chills, fever, joint pain and nausea may also occur. This shows that the vaccine is working.

Like all medicines, the vaccine may cause side effects in some people. These are common, are usually mild and don't last long and won't stop you from having the second dose or going about your daily life.

Some side effects may temporarily affect your ability to drive or use machinery.

Serious allergic reactions do occur but are extremely rare. Our vaccinators are trained to manage these.

## Further support and information

If you experience symptoms that could be COVID-19 related, such as a new continuous 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.

[www.health.govt.nz/covid-vaccine](http://www.health.govt.nz/covid-vaccine)