

# COVID-19 vaccine: FAQs

This advice about the vaccine is for all border and MIQ workers

## How important is it that I get the second shot three weeks later?

You need **two doses** of the Pfizer vaccine to give you the best protection against the virus.

The second dose is given at least 21 days after the first. It's very important you get your second dose.

## Why do I need to wait around for 30 minutes after I get the shot?

Serious allergic reactions do happen after vaccination but are extremely rare, and usually happen shortly after the vaccine. As a result, we ask you to wait around for 30 minutes so if you have a reaction when getting the vaccine, staff will be on hand and trained to treat these immediately.

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

For more information, please refer to the ['After your immunisation'](#) factsheet.

## What if I develop side effects or have any concerns after the 30 minute observation period?

Like all medicines, the vaccine may cause side effects in some people. These are common, are usually mild, 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.

Once you have returned to your daily routine, if you have any concerns about your health or if any symptoms get worse, call Healthline on **0800 358 5453**.

Side effects can be reported to the Centre for Adverse Reactions Monitoring (CARM). Call (03) 479 7247 to speak to a Medical Advisor at CARM.

## After the vaccination do I need to self-isolate for any time?

There is no need for self-isolation following your vaccination.

### **Why is the vaccine not being made available to those under the age of 16 years?**

There's limited data available for this age group at present as they weren't part of the clinical trials, so the vaccine is not available for people under the age of 16 for now. We expect to have more information about the use of the vaccine in those under 16 years later this year.

### **Will it hurt?**

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.

### **What if I can't get the second dose on time or I forget to go or can't for some reason?**

A second dose is important to get maximum protection. When your appointment is confirmed, you will also receive instructions on what to do if you need to reschedule your appointment for any reason.

### **What happens if I contract the virus between the first and second dose?**

If you experience cold, flu or COVID-19 symptoms at any time, stay home and call your doctor or Healthline on 0800 358 5453 for advice about getting tested.

### **Is there a risk of developing COVID-19 from the Pfizer vaccine?**

No. This vaccine will not give you COVID-19. It does not contain any live virus, or dead or deactivated virus.

### **Will being vaccinated cause me to test positive for COVID-19?**

No. You cannot get COVID-19 from the vaccine and it will not cause you to test positive on your usual COVID-19 testing.

### **If I've been vaccinated, do I still need to wear PPE at work?**

Yes. It's not yet clear whether a vaccinated person can still transmit the virus to someone else.

So until this is understood, workers will need to maintain their high standards around PPE. It is also important to maintain the other public health measures such as regular hand hygiene, sneeze and cough etiquette, and staying at home if unwell.

### **Are there any people who should not receive the vaccine for medical reasons?**

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.

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.

### **Is there any risk that taking pain relief after getting the vaccine could reduce its effectiveness?**

No. Paracetamol or ibuprofen can be taken. Follow the manufacturer's instructions. Seek advice from your health professional if your symptoms worsen.

### **I haven't had any side effects after the vaccine. Does that mean it's not working?**

Not everyone will experience side effects. Those that do are most likely to notice a painful arm or other minor symptoms, perhaps lasting for a day or so.

If symptoms persist people should talk to their doctor.

### **If I have been allergic to other vaccines, can I safely have the Pfizer/BioNTech 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.

### **What will happen if serious side effects are found after the vaccine is rolled out?**

New Zealand's own medicines regulator Medsafe has followed a robust assessment process to ensure this vaccine is safe and effective for use in New Zealand. There will continue to be monitoring of side effects.

If you have any questions or concerns, please discuss this with your vaccinator or contact your doctor or Healthline on 0800 358 5453.

Side effects can be reported to the Centre for Adverse Reactions Monitoring (CARM). Call (03) 479 7247 to speak to a Medical Advisor at CARM.

### **Will the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine alter my genes?**

No. There is no possibility that the vaccine can affect your DNA/genes.

### **Will the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine work against the new variants that have emerged around the world?**

Clinical trial data from Pfizer indicates the COVID-19 vaccine has been 95 percent effective when administered to trial participants. The company reports efficacy across age, gender, race and ethnicity demographics.

The Ministry of Health is currently evaluating data from other countries about the impacts of new strains on vaccine effectiveness.

### **If the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine needs to stay frozen, how is it transported and delivered?**

The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine requires two doses and must be stored at -70 degrees Celsius.

The Ministry of Health has purchased nine large -80°C freezers that can store more than 1.5 million doses of vaccine. These will serve as our central storage facility for vaccine that requires ultra-low temperatures. Prior to being used the vaccine will be defrosted and can be kept refrigerated at a temperature of 2-8 degrees for up to 5 days.

### **Will the vaccine work on older adults 65+?**

Yes, the Pfizer vaccine has been shown to be highly effective in older adults aged over 65.

If you have any questions or concerns, please discuss this with your vaccinator or contact your doctor or Healthline on 0800 358 5453.

### **What's the relationship between other vaccines (for example, flu or measles) and COVID-19 vaccine – can people get them at the same time? Should one be prioritized over the other?**

We are actively considering advice around the timing of COVID-19 vaccines with respect to other vaccines, but can confirm that COVID-19 vaccines cannot be administered within:

- two weeks of an influenza vaccine, or
- four weeks of any other vaccine, for example, the Measles, Mumps, and Rubella (MMR) vaccination.

Having a gap between two different vaccinations also makes it easier to judge which vaccine may be responsible for any adverse events. This approach is important in the current context because COVID-19 vaccines are new.

The Ministry of Health is developing vaccination plans with providers that take into account the current recommended spacing of at least two weeks between receiving COVID-19 and influenza vaccines.

The Ministry of Health's advice on administering MMR and the COVID-19 vaccine to Tier 1 workers and their household contacts is that if someone is within four weeks of receiving the COVID-19 vaccine, priority should be given to the COVID-19 vaccine over MMR.

Their MMR vaccine should be re-booked on completion of their two COVID-19 vaccine doses, so that the opportunity to protect against measles is not lost.