



# COVID-19 vaccination programme in Waikato

19 August 2021

*“Amohia ake te ora o te iwi, ka puta ki te wheiao.”  
“To protect the wellbeing of our people is paramount”  
Kiingi Tuuheitia Pootatau Te Wherowhero Te Tuawhitu*

## COVID-19 VACCINATION FOR 12-15 year olds

Important information for all Kaupapa Māori and Pacific providers, General Practice, Community Pharmacy and Urgent Care teams

Please share this information with your teams.

Thank you again for the work you have been doing to keep our communities safe and prevent Covid spreading across Aotearoa.

The Prime Minister today announced that Cabinet had approved the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for use for 12-15 year olds. Please see the information below provided by the Ministry of Health.

### Vaccination of 12-15 year olds

Medsafe has already given provisional approval for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for 12- to 15-year-olds in New Zealand.

From Friday 20 August, as parents or guardians become eligible to book for a vaccination, they can also book in a vaccination for any 12-15-year olds in their whānau.

Bookings can be made by visiting [BookMyVaccine.nz](https://www.bookmyvaccine.nz).

Young people aged 12-15 years will be able to access the vaccine through a variety of ways most convenient to them and their family/whānau, for example:

- At their general practice or community pharmacy
- At a community vaccination centre
- At other community-based sites such as faith-based locations or marae

There is an estimated 265,000 people in the 12-15 years age bracket. We have ordered more than enough Pfizer vaccines for everyone, including this age group.

This will make it more convenient for whole families to be vaccinated at the same time.

### About the Vaccine

The vaccine has been approved by our own Medsafe experts. It's also already been used successfully all around the world by millions of people, and by hundreds of thousands here in New Zealand/Aotearoa.

The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine has already been approved for 12-15 year olds in Canada, the USA, Europe, and Japan.

Medsafe only grants consent for a vaccine in New Zealand/ Aotearoa once they're satisfied it has passed required levels of safety and effectiveness.

The process is the same one Medsafe has used to assess other medicines, like the flu vaccine.

Following Medsafe granting Provisional Approval, the decision to open up vaccinations for 12 – 15-year olds was made by Cabinet.





## Q and As for your teams

### Why are we doing this?

Getting vaccinated is the best way to protect ourselves and our whānau. The more of us who are vaccinated in our community, the greater our immunity. We want to protect young people and their families from COVID-19.

### Is it safe for a young person aged between 12-15 years to get the COVID-19 vaccine?

Medsafe have approved the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine for those aged 12-15 years old. It has already been used in this age group overseas. Medsafe only grants consent for a vaccine in Aotearoa New Zealand once they're satisfied it has passed required levels of safety and effectiveness.

### Do young people have the same side effects as adults?

Young people get similar rates of side effects such as fatigue, headache, fever and tiredness as adults.

### I've already booked my vaccine appointment; how do I get my 12-15 year old added to my booking?

Call 0800 28 29 26 (8am-8pm, 7 days a week) to see if your vaccination site has space to add your 12-15 year old to the booking. If not, you can cancel your booking and create a new one later that can fit you all in.

### Do they need to provide ID?

Identification is not required, but staff will check your personal details when you arrive for your appointment.

### I have an 11-year-old child who turns 12 in the next few months, can they get it early?

No. Medsafe and Cabinet have only approved for those aged 12 years and above to receive the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine and anyone under 12 years will need to wait until they are eligible.

## Q & A – Informed consent

### Who can give informed consent?

Those aged between 12 and 15 years who go to their usual healthcare provider or a COVID-19 vaccination centre for a COVID-19 vaccine can provide informed consent, if deemed competent to consent, and be given the vaccine.

A parent or caregiver is also able to give informed consent on behalf of the young person.

### Is it legal for minors to provide their own consent to be vaccinated?

As with other vaccination programmes and under New Zealand law, children under the age of 16 years may give or withhold consent to healthcare treatment, so long as they are competent to do so.

### It is the role of the healthcare professional to decide whether a child is competent.

A child can be considered competent to consent "when a child achieves sufficient understanding and maturity to fully comprehend the proposed treatment".

### Does a parent of legal guardian need to be present or provide consent for the younger person aged 12-15 years?

Under the code of consumer rights, every consumer, including a child, has the right to the information they need to make an informed choice or to give informed consent. Therefore, a younger person can provide their own informed consent and a parent or guardian does not need to provide consent or be present.





## How does the COVID-19 vaccine work?

Vaccines can help protect you and reduce the spread of COVID-19 by helping our body trigger an immune response. The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is an mRNA vaccine, which is like a recipe the body can use to make a spike protein that our immune system responds to without us actually getting sick. Our immune system remembers what to do, so if we encounter the actual virus in the future, we know how to fight it off.

Some vaccines you may have had before could be the measles/mumps/rubella vaccine, Gardasil or Influenza vaccine.

You can watch a video about how [the vaccine works](#).

## When can I get a COVID-19 vaccine?

If you are aged between 12-15 years you are able to get your vaccination from 19 August.

## What if my parent or guardian doesn't want me to get the vaccine?

Where possible we recommend discussing the vaccination with your whānau or a trusted support person or adult. However, as a 12-15 year old your parent or guardian's permission is not required if your healthcare provider is confident you are deemed competent to give consent.

## Does my parent or guardian need to provide consent?

A health professional will discuss the vaccination with you prior to getting the vaccine. You can ask any questions you have, and if you have a good understanding, you can say yes to getting the vaccine/provide your own informed consent. You can also decide not to be vaccinated. Your parent or caregiver can provide consent if you would prefer.

## Where can I get the COVID-19 Vaccine?

From August 19 you can book a vaccine at a COVID-19 vaccination site or with your usual healthcare provider. This might be your local doctor, pharmacy, medical and Hauora centre, marae, church or community clinic.

## Is it safe?

Medsafe's (New Zealand's medicines safety authority) experts only grant consent for a vaccine to be used in Aotearoa once they're satisfied it has passed required levels of safety and effectiveness.

## What can I expect when I get the vaccine?

When you go to your vaccination, you will need to agree to getting the vaccine and give informed consent. Your vaccinator can give you information and answer any questions to help you decide.

If you say yes, the vaccinator will give you the COVID-19 vaccine into your arm using a needle.

- The vaccine will be given into your upper arm.
- You will need to relax and sit still.
- You can look away from your arm and close your eyes if you are feeling nervous.
- You can also listen to music or talk to someone who supports you.
- You may feel a pinch or a scratch feeling when the needle goes in.

## What happens after I get the vaccine?

You'll need to stay for at least 20 minutes after your vaccine so the healthcare worker can check that you're OK and not having any allergic reactions to the vaccine. Your support person can stay with you.

Once the healthcare worker says you're fine, you can leave and carry on with your day.





## How might I feel after I get the vaccine?

Some people might get side effects. This can happen with all medicines. There will be health professionals at every vaccination site to assist if you do have a reaction.

The most common side effects are:

- a sore arm from your injection – you can put a cold cloth or ice pack on it to feel better
- a headache
- feeling tired
- feeling feverish or sweaty

These side effects are mild and shouldn't last long.

If you are worried about how you feel after your vaccine, talk to your parent, caregiver or usual healthcare provider. You can report any side-effects you experience here: <https://report.vaccine.covid19.govt.nz/s/>

## Q & A for vaccinators

### Can a 12-15-year-old give Informed Consent for COVID-19 Vaccine?

Under the code of rights, every consumer, including a child, has the right to the information they need to make an informed choice or to give informed consent. Therefore, a young person aged 12-15 can provide their own informed consent if they are deemed competent to give consent and a parent or guardian does not need to provide consent or be present. Some young people may choose to have their parent or guardian consent on their behalf and that is fine.

### Should I offer verbal or written consent?

Informed consent for 12-15-year olds can be verbal however, written consent must be obtained if there is significant risk of adverse effects to the consumer, or if it is the provider's or vaccinator's preference.

### Is the vaccine safe for those aged 12-15 and are there any additional considerations as a vaccinator?

The most common side effects in young people aged 12 to 15 are like those in people aged 16 and above. They include pain and swelling at the injection site, tiredness, headache, muscle and joint pain, enlarged lymph nodes, chills, nausea, vomiting and fever. These effects are usually mild or moderate and improve within a few days from the vaccination.

Like with consumers over the age of 16, it is important to assess the administration site and select the correct needle length. Most commonly, the same needles used for adults would be used for 12-15-year olds.

### How will it interact with other vaccines?

COVID-19 vaccination does not interact with other vaccinations. It needs to be given two weeks before or after vaccinations like the flu vaccine or Gardasil, and either two weeks before or four weeks after 'live' vaccinations such as MMR.

### How do I ensure the young person has adequate understanding of the vaccine and can provide informed consent?

IMAC and the Ministry are working on training and guidance material to support vaccinators to gauge a consumer's ability to provide informed consent. It is important that a robust conversation occurs prior to vaccination, where the consumer has an opportunity to have any questions answered and concerns addressed.

For regular updates about COVID-19 in the Waikato visit our Waikato DHB website and facebook page

If you have any questions, queries or concerns, feel free to contact me.

Ngā mihi nui,

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