

# UPDATED COVID-19 VACCINE NOW AVAILABLE

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT COVID-19 VACCINES



This leaflet is designed to answer some of the questions you or your whānau may have about COVID-19 and the updated vaccine.

You can also speak to your healthcare provider, scan the QR code for more information about who should have an updated vaccine, or visit [covid19.govt.nz](https://covid19.govt.nz).



### Q1. Is COVID-19 still a risk?

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Yes, New Zealanders continue to get sick with COVID-19, with some developing severe disease that requires treatment in hospital. The virus that causes COVID-19 continues to adapt and change, and it is these changes that can cause new outbreaks of disease. Keeping up to date with your COVID-19 vaccinations offers the best possible protection against severe illness from COVID-19.

### Q2. What exactly are COVID-19 variants?

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The virus that causes COVID-19 is always changing and forming new 'variants' or 'strains'. More than 50 variants have been identified since the emergence of COVID-19. Some of the newer variants may be more infectious than the original virus. The updated COVID-19 vaccine helps boost your immunity to offer you the best possible protection against new variants.

### Q3. Is everyone still at risk of COVID-19?

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Everyone has some level of risk from COVID-19, but some people are at higher risk for developing severe illness. Some examples of risk factors are listed below, but you should talk to your healthcare provider to understand your risk.

#### Risk factors for severe disease include:

- Older age (50+ years)
- Pregnancy
- Smoking
- Diabetes
- Overweight (BMI >35)
- Cancer
- Living with disability
- High blood pressure
- Lung disease
- Serious heart conditions
- Severe liver disease
- Kidney disease
- Immunocompromised

### Q4. Is it true that there will be an increase in cases in autumn/winter?

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COVID-19 has not yet become a seasonal disease (like flu), but we do know that it spreads more easily when people are indoors and close to each other, especially if masks are not worn. For this reason, there will likely be a spike in the number of cases when indoor gatherings become more frequent through autumn and winter. The more people who are up to date with their COVID-19 vaccinations, the better protected we all are against a severe outbreak.

### Q5. How is the updated vaccine different from the original vaccine?

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The updated vaccine is based on the original vaccine, but has been updated to ensure it helps protect against the newer strains of the virus that are currently causing disease in the community.

### Q6. Why should I get an updated COVID-19 vaccine?

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The original virus that caused COVID-19 has already changed many times and may continue to evolve. The updated vaccine has been specifically developed to target some of these newer variants and may help provide broader protection against future variants.

Even if you are vaccinated or have tested positive for COVID-19 before, your immunity weakens over time. Getting an updated COVID-19 vaccine gives your immune system a boost so it will be better prepared to fight against the current strains of the virus. This may help lower your risk of getting very sick from COVID-19.

By being up to date with your COVID-19 vaccinations, you also reduce the risk of spreading the virus to others.



# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT COVID-19 VACCINES

## Q7. Who can get an updated COVID-19 vaccine?

Everyone 30 years of age or older is eligible for the updated COVID-19 vaccine. People 12-29 years of age who are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 are also eligible for the updated COVID-19 vaccine. It is recommended that you wait at least 6 months after either your last COVID-19 vaccine or COVID-19 infection before receiving your dose. You can check your eligibility by scanning the QR code on the front of this leaflet or ask your healthcare provider to check for you.

## Q8. If I already had COVID-19, do I still need to get an updated vaccine?

Even if you have had COVID-19, it is still recommended that you get an updated vaccine (at least 6 months after your positive COVID-19 test). Vaccination provides a better level of immunity than a COVID-19 infection alone.

## Q9. If I didn't complete a primary vaccination course, can I get an updated COVID-19 vaccine?

Yes, the updated COVID-19 vaccine is available to all eligible people regardless of whether or not you have received a COVID-19 vaccine before.

## Q10. Can I get the flu vaccine and an updated COVID-19 vaccine at the same time?

Yes, the COVID-19 and flu vaccines can be given at the same time. Health New Zealand recommends this approach as it helps protect against two important illnesses in one visit. Talk to your healthcare provider about which vaccines are recommended for you.

## Q11. Will I have side effects?

Like all vaccines, COVID-19 vaccines can cause side effects, although not everybody gets them. Side effects like fever, tiredness, headache, muscle/joint pain, chills, nausea, and pain, swelling or redness at the injection site are common and usually go away within a few days after vaccination. More serious side effects are possible but very unlikely. If you get any side effects, talk to your healthcare provider.

## Q12. Who checks that the COVID-19 vaccines are OK to use?

Before vaccines are approved for use, they are reviewed by an independent regulatory agency to ensure their benefits outweigh any possible harm. In Aotearoa New Zealand, this agency is Medsafe.

Each new vaccine must be tested extensively, including laboratory research, animal studies and human clinical trials. Medsafe reviews all of this information before making its decision. Because, while it is important to test how effective a vaccine is, ensuring the vaccine is safe for its intended use is the highest priority.

COVID-19 vaccines are one of the most well-studied vaccines ever made and they are continuously monitored globally for any new side effects.

### For more information

Scan the QR code to view the updated COVID-19 vaccine Consumer Medicine Information.



### Have questions about vaccines?

Scan the QR code to learn more.



 Vaccination helpline: 0800 28 29 26.

COMIRNATY LP.8.1 is a vaccine given to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) in individuals 6 months of age and older. Talk to your doctor if you have any other medical conditions, take any other medicines, or are pregnant or plan to become pregnant or are breastfeeding. As with any vaccine, COMIRNATY LP.8.1 may not fully protect all those who receive it and it is not known how long you will be protected.

All medicines have risks and benefits. Talk to your healthcare provider to see if this medicine is right for you.

COMIRNATY is a prescription medicine provided free of charge for eligible people. Regular doctor or pharmacy fees may apply. For further information, please see the Consumer Medicine Information (CMI) available at [www.medsafe.govt.nz](http://www.medsafe.govt.nz)