

COVID-19 VACCINATION

Information Sheet

When you get vaccinated you're not just protecting yourself. You're also doing your bit by reducing the risk of passing on COVID-19 to your family, friends and community. The COVID-19 vaccine is free, effective and voluntary for those aged 16 years and over in the Cook Islands.

Why am I being offered a COVID-19 vaccination?

Getting a COVID-19 vaccine is an important step you can take to protect yourself, your family and community from the effects of the virus. It's one way we can fight the COVID-19 pandemic and protect our welfare and wellbeing. By having the vaccine you'll be playing your part to protect us all. The free and voluntary COVID-19 vaccine will help protect and safeguard the people of the Cook Islands. It will save lives.

What COVID-19 vaccine is available in the Cook Islands?

The Pfizer vaccine will be rolled out across the whole of the Cook Islands.

When can I get my COVID-19 vaccine?

A start date is still to be confirmed. Once we have this date a Te Marae Ora representative will make contact with each eligible person in the Cook Islands to arrange a date and time for an appointment.

Do I need to book an appointment?

No. A Te Marae Ora (TMO) representative will call you to schedule your date and time for your appointment to receive the vaccine.

Where will I go to get my COVID-19 vaccine?

In Rarotonga, all vaccinations will be done at the Rarotonga Hospital in Nikao. In the Pa Enua, the vaccine will be administered at a designated Health Centre.

Who is eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine in the Cook Islands?

Everyone in the Cook Islands at the time of the vaccine rollout who is registered in the Ministry of Health patient database is eligible to receive the vaccine, regardless of your residency or permit status. You must also be aged 16 years or older on vaccination day.

Is the vaccine safe?

All COVID-19 vaccines must meet internationally agreed standards for safety and efficacy. Medsafe (New Zealand's medicines safety authority) only grants consent for vaccines to be used in New Zealand once they are satisfied that they are safe and effective. There have been no shortcuts in granting approval for our COVID-19 vaccine (the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine).

What is the Pfizer vaccine?

Pfizer is a mRNA-based (messenger ribonucleic acid) vaccine. The Pfizer vaccine does not contain any live, dead or deactivated viruses. There are no animal products in this vaccine.

How does the Pfizer vaccine work?

Vaccines protect your health and prevent disease by working with your body's natural defences, so you're ready to fight the virus if you're exposed. The Pfizer vaccine will not give you COVID-19. It does not contain any live virus, or dead or deactivated virus. It works by triggering your immune system to produce antibodies and blood cells that work against the COVID-19 virus.

How is the Pfizer vaccine given?

Pfizer is given as an injection into the muscle of your upper arm. You'll need two doses. The second dose is given at least 21 days later. It's very important you get your second dose, you have your best protection once you have both doses. Medical Staff will observe you for at least 20 minutes after your injection.

How effective is the Pfizer vaccine to protect me from COVID-19?

Getting a COVID-19 vaccine is an important step you can take to protect yourself from the effects of the virus. As with any vaccine, Pfizer may not fully protect everyone who gets it. The clinical trials performed on the Pfizer vaccine show it's approximately 95% effective against symptomatic COVID-19, seven days after receiving two doses. We don't yet know how long you'll be protected or if it will stop you from catching and passing on the virus. Research has shown that immunity following natural infection remains for at least eight months and we have every expectation the vaccine immunity will be even longer.

Are there any side effects and reactions to the Pfizer vaccine?

Like all medicines, the vaccine may cause side effects in some people. These are common, are usually mild and don't last long. They may be more common after your second dose. Potential side effects of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine include injection site pain, fatigue, headache, muscle pain, chills, joint pain, fever, injection site swelling, injection site redness, nausea, malaise, and lymphadenopathy (enlargement of the lymph nodes).

Can the Pfizer vaccine cause me to develop COVID-19?

No. Pfizer and BioNTech's COVID-19 vaccine is an mRNA vaccine, which does not use the live virus but rather a small portion of the viral sequence of the SARS-CoV-2 virus to instruct the body to produce the spike protein displayed on the surface of the virus. That spike protein then generates an immune response to the virus to potentially prevent infection. The vaccine does not allow the SARS-CoV-2 virus to replicate and it cannot cause any known illness. No vaccine can cause a patient to develop the disease against which they were vaccinated.

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT

Before your vaccination



A TMO representative will call you to arrange your vaccination appointment.

Getting your vaccination



You will need to agree to be vaccinated.



Then the healthcare worker will inject the vaccine into your arm.



You'll need to stay for at least 20 minutes after so a healthcare worker can check you're ok.



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

After your vaccination



You will be asked to get your second dose of the vaccine at least 21 days later.



You get your best protection against COVID-19 after 2 doses of the vaccine.



If you have side effects or feel unwell after your vaccination, speak with your health professional, or call Tupapa Outpatients 20066.

Pregnant? Talk to your midwife or doctor.

Under 16 years old? At this stage, the vaccine is not available for under 16s.

If you're taking any other medications, talk to your doctor before getting the vaccine.