

Frequently asked questions about the vaccine

- Can my children get vaccinated?
- Is the vaccine safe for 12 to 15-year-olds?
- Do 12 to 15-year-olds need their parent's permission to get the vaccine?
- At Alert Level 4 I was previously advised I am at risk (older person or underlying conditions), but I'm now vaccinated. Should I still ask someone else to pick up essentials like food and medicine? Am I still considered at risk if I'm vaccinated?
- Why has the observation period time changed?
- What is the Delta variant?
- Am I protected from Delta being vaccinated?

Q. Can my children get vaccinated?

Cabinet has now approved the vaccine for use for 12 to 15-year-olds.

From last Friday 20 August 2021, as parents or guardians become eligible to book for a vaccination, they can also book in a vaccination for any 12 to 15-year-olds in their whānau. Bookings can be made by visiting [Book My Vaccine](#).

Young people aged 12 to 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

Parents and caregivers who already have a booking can take their 12 to 15-year-olds with them. This will make it more convenient for whole families to be vaccinated at the same time.

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

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. The 40+ age band opened from last Thursday 19 August. Anyone in that age band can now visit [Book My Vaccine](#) to make their bookings.

Q. Is the vaccine safe for 12 to 15-year-olds?

The vaccine has been approved by our own Medsafe experts. Medsafe only grants consent for a vaccine in Aotearoa New Zealand once they're satisfied it has passed required levels of safety and effectiveness.

The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine has already been approved for 12 to 15-year-olds in other countries including Canada, the USA, Europe and Japan. The vaccine has been administered to millions of people around the world and to hundreds of thousands here in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Q. Do 12 to 15-year-olds need their parent’s permission to get the vaccine?

As with other vaccination programmes and under New Zealand law, children and young people 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 or young person is competent.

A child or young person can be considered competent to consent “when a child achieves sufficient understanding and maturity to fully comprehend the proposed treatment”.

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

Q. At Alert Level 4 I was previously advised I am at risk (older person or underlying conditions), but I’m now vaccinated. Should I still ask someone else to pick up essentials like food and medicine? Am I still considered at risk if I’m vaccinated?

Vaccines help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and reduce your chances of getting seriously ill or dying if you do get COVID-19.

Even if you are vaccinated, you should still take precautions, including limiting interactions with others, wearing a face covering in public, and staying home where possible.

Q: Why has the observation period time changed?

The observation period after COVID-19 vaccinations will now be a minimum of 15 minutes instead of 20 minutes. This change keeps vaccination plans on track as we move through Alert Levels, while maintaining patient safety and without putting additional pressure on the workforce to keep clinics open longer.

Q. What is the Delta variant?

The Delta variant has several differences compared to earlier iterations of the virus.

These differences mean that the Delta variant is a greater threat to the health of individuals who contract the infection and a greater challenge to contain the spread of the virus in an outbreak. For example, Delta can cause people to develop more serious COVID-19 illness than other variants of the virus

- People with a Delta infection are at higher risk of needing hospitalisation.
- The chance of infecting others such as within your household or other contacts is very high because Delta is so transmissible.
- It is estimated that on average, one person infected with Delta may infect five or six other people – this is how Delta outbreaks in places overseas have grown so rapidly.
- People with Delta infections seem to carry much more virus (have a higher viral load) and for a longer period of time than those infected with the original virus or other variants.

- The time from exposure to the virus until first symptoms is shorter for the Delta variant. Some people may have no symptoms (asymptomatic) when infectious.

Q. Am I protected from Delta being vaccinated?

Being fully vaccinated gives you a high degree of protection against Delta infection, and an even higher degree of protection against severe illness, hospitalisation and death.

Evidence currently shows the effectiveness of two doses of the Pfizer vaccine against illness due to Delta infection is about 88% and the protection against hospitalisation due to Delta infection about 96%.

However, no vaccine is 100% effective so there is some chance that a vaccinated person may become infected with the Delta variant and may transmit the virus to other people. Taking other precautions will remain important in order to continue to protect our communities.

As well as vaccination, early detection of cases and swift contact tracing, as well as isolation of cases and contacts, will be critical due to the shorter incubation period of Delta.