Unite against COVID-19

(New Zealand Government, 2023b) [23 Feb 2023]

New booster plan in time for winter

23 Feb 2023

From 1 March the Pfizer bivalent vaccine will replace the existing booster. From 1 April, an additional booster will be available for those eligible.

All New Zealanders aged 30 and over will be able to access the new COVID-19 bivalent booster from April as part of the Government's plan to keep Kiwis safe and take pressure off our health system.

The new bivalent vaccine will replace the existing Pfizer booster and is considered likely to be more effective against Omicron subvariants. Bivalent vaccines work by combining 2 strains of a virus, which prompts the body to create antibodies against both strains, providing a greater level of protection.

From 1 April, anyone 30 years or over will be eligible to receive the bivalent vaccine, as long as it has been at least 6 months since their last COVID-19 booster or positive COVID-19 test.

People at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 will also be able to receive an additional booster, regardless of how many doses they have previously had.

As well as broadening the criteria from April, from 1 March anyone currently eligible for a COVID-19 booster will be able to get the new bivalent vaccine.

We know vaccination is the best protection against the virus, and these actions will provide added protection to a larger number of adult New Zealanders. The latest report from the Ministry of Health indicated 8,220 cases over the previous week so the virus is definitely still circulating out there.

We are also planning for older New Zealanders and those most at risk of getting sick to get a flu jab at the same time as their COVID-19 booster. This will be part of a 'one and done' approach to help people stay well this winter.

Because it may be a while since your previous boosters, now is a good time to check your records on My Covid Record.

Log in to My Covid Record (https://mycovidrecord.health.nz/)

Vaccination against COVID-19 remains free.

Getting boosted is important for your health and keeping you out of hospital this winter.

How to book

Those currently eligible for the COVID-19 booster are encouraged to make a booking by visiting BookMyVaccine.nz (https://bookmyvaccine.covid19.health.nz/) or calling the COVID-19 Vaccination Healthline on 0800 28 29 26 (8am to 8pm, 7 days a week).

People who will become eligible for an additional booster from 1 April will be able to make a booking later in March.

Who is eligible for a booster

You can find more information about getting a booster on this website. Including who is currently eligible and how to get a booster.

COVID-19 boosters

From 1 April

From 1 April, anyone who has completed a primary course will be eligible to get another booster if you are:

- aged 30 and over or
- at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

It will need to be at least 6 months since your last COVID-19 booster or a positive COVID-19 test.

High-risk groups include:

- people aged 65 years and over
- Māori and Pacific peoples aged 50 years and over
- residents of aged care and disability care facilities
- severely immunocompromised people

- people aged 16 years and over who have a medical condition that increases the risk of severe breakthrough COVID-19 illness
- people aged 16 years and over who live with a disability with significant or complex health needs or multiple comorbidities.

In all instances the additional booster dose can only be administered to eligible people who have completed a primary COVID-19 vaccination course, and whose most recent COVID-19 vaccine or positive COVID-19 test was at least 6 months ago, irrespective of how many prior booster doses that person has received.