

# Latest COVID-19 Vaccine Key Messages

## Approved messages for use in your communications

Consistent messaging helps us to coordinate our efforts to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This document provides approved key messages from the Ministry. You may share this messaging with your internal and external audiences.

**3 February 2021, FINAL**

## Medsafe provisional consent to use Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine

- On 3 February 2021, Medsafe formally gazetted its decision to grant provisional consent to use the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine in New Zealand.
- Provisional consent means the pharmaceutical company must meet certain conditions, including supplying more data from its clinical trials around the world. This will happen at the same time as the vaccine is rolled out.
- Following advice from Ministry of Health officials, the Government will make a decision about using the vaccine this week.

## COVID-19 vaccines

- The Government has four Advance Purchase Agreements for COVID-19 vaccines. All agreements are subject to the vaccines successfully completing clinical trials and being approved by Medsafe.
- Medsafe evaluates applications for all new medicines, including vaccines, which must comply with international standards and local requirements for quality, safety and efficacy before they can be approved and used in New Zealand.
- Medsafe is streamlining its assessment processes and prioritising the evaluation of COVID-19 vaccines over other medicines so that we can get a vaccine more quickly. They'll still have the same rigorous level of scrutiny that all medicines undergo.
- Three of vaccines are two-dose:
  - Pfizer and BioNTech – 1.5 million doses of vaccine (enough for 750,000 people).
  - Oxford and AstraZeneca – 7.6 million doses of vaccine (enough for 3.8 million people).
  - Novavax – 10.72 million doses of vaccine (enough for 5.36 million people).
- One vaccine is single dose:
  - Janssen Pharmaceutica – up to 5 million COVID-19 vaccines.
- Medsafe has given provisional consent to use the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine and is currently reviewing one other vaccine.
- The COVID-19 Immunisation Programme is continuing to work at pace to be ready to roll out the COVID-19 vaccine as soon as it is approved by Medsafe and ready for use.
- The COVID-19 vaccine will be free of charge.
- The COVID-19 vaccine will not be mandatory for the New Zealand public.

## COVID-19 vaccine rollout

- The confirmed timing of the rollout will depend on Medsafe approval of the vaccine and when the suppliers can deliver it.
- A sequenced framework (the order of rollout) will be used to guide the rollout of the vaccines as they become available.
- As things currently stand, border and MIQ workers, covered by the Required Testing Order (2020), will be the first group to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. This reflects the critical role they play, standing between the people of Aotearoa New Zealand and those who might unwittingly bring the virus into our communities, and the higher risk that represents.
- The Ministry of Health has been working towards a second quarter rollout for this (potentially during March); however, if the vaccine becomes available earlier, we would look to move as soon as possible.
- We expect to then make vaccines available for the general public in the second half of the year, subject to supply.
- The Ministry of Health also plans to offer vaccination to those MIQ and border workers' household contacts at the same time to ensure they receive the same level of protection. Although we know the vaccine will protect individuals from the effects of the virus, it is too early for researchers to confirm whether a vaccinated person could still be a carrier and transmit COVID-19 to someone else.
- Given it is too early to confirm whether a vaccinated person could still transmit COVID-19, mandatory testing of our border and MIQ workforce will continue.
- The Ministry of Health is preparing for a range of vaccine scenarios should the COVID-19 situation in New Zealand change.
- Ensuring equity of outcomes is a key measure of success, including protection for Māori, Pacific peoples and our most vulnerable population groups, such as older people, disabled people, health workers, essential workers and border staff.

## Workforce – vaccinators

- The Ministry of Health is planning for an extra 2,000 to 3,000 full-time (or equivalent) vaccinators to be trained and available when needed throughout New Zealand. This number will continue to grow during 2021, in line with vaccine delivery schedules.
- The Immunisation Advisory Centre will provide training on the COVID-19 vaccines. The training is expected to start in February 2021 and will be available online as well as face-to-face, across the country.
- The Ministry of Health is currently seeking additional vaccinators to support the COVID-19 vaccine rollout. Retired health professionals or others not currently in the health workforce who may want to volunteer as a vaccinator, can register their interest via the **COVID-19 Surge Workforce database**, which can be found on the Ministry of Health COVID-19 Vaccine Planning webpage, or email **covid-19vaccine@health.govt.nz**. Please note that this database is only for people not currently in the health workforce willing to be involved in the roll out.
- The Ministry of Health is working closely with DHBs on vaccine rollout.

## Impact of the vaccine on our borders

- At this stage, we can't advise how the availability of vaccines in New Zealand and internationally will influence any changes to our border controls.
- Although the data confirms the vaccines protect individuals from the effects of the virus, it is too early for researchers to confirm whether a vaccinated person could still be a carrier and transmit COVID-19 to someone else. Until that information is certain we need to maintain our current border settings.

## EU export controls

The European Union has introduced a new export control measure for COVID-19 vaccines manufactured in the EU.

The Ministry of Health is working to urgently clarify whether there are implications for New Zealand's Advance Purchase Agreement vaccine orders.

Our advance purchase agreements for COVID-19 vaccines include timing for delivery of vaccines and it is up to the pharmaceutical companies to meet the agreed timing schedule for delivery.

We have joined the global COVAX Facility, a global mechanism to invest in scale-up of manufacturing capacity and ensure equitable distribution of COVID-19 vaccines worldwide, including to our Pacific neighbours. COVAX Facility orders are not subject to these export controls.

## Further information

- The Ministry of Health has published the latest vaccine information, including the details of the COVID-19 vaccine planning and delivery groups, on its website under COVID-19 Response planning – Vaccine planning: <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-response-planning/covid-19-vaccine-planning>
- Medsafe has a section on its website explaining our processes around assessing the quality, efficacy and safety of vaccines and treatments for COVID-19. This can be found here: <https://www.medsafe.govt.nz/COVID-19/covid-landing.asp>

## Vaccine strategy – background

On 12 October, the Government announced it has signed an agreement to purchase enough COVID-19 vaccine for 750,000 people from Pfizer and BioNTech, subject to the vaccine successfully completing all clinical trials and passing regulatory approval in New Zealand.

It also announced funding for medical supplies and infrastructure to ensure New Zealand was ready to launch a COVID-19 Immunisation Programme as soon as we have a safe and effective vaccine. The Government announced in May 2020 initial investment to enable the COVID-19 vaccine strategy.

On 27 August, the Government **announced additional funding** to help secure access to promising vaccine candidates through participating in global initiatives such as the COVAX Facility, and investing early in the vaccine development process, using tools like advance purchasing arrangements.

On 21 September, the Government **confirmed its commitment to the COVAX Facility** and announced initial investment to support its COVID-19 vaccine development and manufacture. More **information on New Zealand's COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy is available online.**