

Guide to the COVID-19 Vaccine and Immunisation rollout:

Border and MIQ workers

You will have heard that Aotearoa New Zealand is securing enough vaccines to protect our entire population from the COVID-19 virus and that the first vaccine has been given provisional consent from Medsafe.

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.

The confirmed timing of the rollout will depend on when the suppliers can deliver the vaccine.

Because of your role at the frontline, working to keep the country safe, it is highly likely you will be one of the first people vaccinated. More details about what this means and answers to some of the key initial questions you might have are below.

Rollout

- 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 you 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.
- We have been working towards a first quarter rollout for this; however, if the vaccine becomes available earlier, we would look to move as soon as possible. We will keep you and your employers updated on timeframes.
- We also plan to offer vaccination to the people you live with 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. Until we know otherwise we need to assume that could be the case and keep our current precautions – such as PPE and regular testing – in place.
- We will contact you, either directly or through your employer, for your help in identifying your household contacts and any specific situations that need to be considered.

Is the vaccine safe?

- The vaccines that Medsafe approves are robustly assessed and must meet international standards and local requirements for quality and safety.
- As with any medicine, Medsafe will closely monitor the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, including analysing any reports of side effects.

Are vaccines mandatory?

- COVID-19 vaccinations will not be compulsory in New Zealand and anyone is free to choose whether to get vaccinated.
- COVID-19 vaccinations are being made available to you as a means of added protection against the risk you encounter as part of your workplace duties and we strongly encourage vaccination to protect yourself and the people you live with.

What happens if I don't want to be vaccinated?

- If you work in a high-risk MIQ/border setting and do not wish to receive a COVID-19 vaccination, this may create a health and safety issue for both yourself and your employer. These situations and the available options are currently being explored and will need to be discussed with your employer.

Do I still need to be tested?

- The vaccines will protect individuals from the effects of the virus; however, it is too early yet for researchers to determine whether a vaccinated person could still transmit the virus to someone else. While this remains unclear we have to assume there is still a risk of transmission.
- This means that the mandatory testing of our border and MIQ workforce still needs to continue. It is also an important reminder that the vaccines are not a substitute for good hygiene practices of wearing PPE, washing hands, coughing and sneezing into your elbow, wearing masks or face coverings and other precautions.

Will I have a choice of which vaccine I receive?

- All the vaccines have gone through a robust process to ensure they are safe and effective. The vaccine you are likely to get will be based on when it's available in New Zealand. The first vaccine that has been approved is the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine.
- We are working to make vaccines available to the border and MIQ workforce as a priority. The four vaccines New Zealand has secured are going through the approval process at different times.

Next steps

- We know you will have lots of questions – please share these with your employer so they can pass them back to us.
- You can also find more information on the Unite against COVID-19 website – [Covid19.govt.nz/vaccines](https://www.unite.co.nz/covid-19/vaccines)