

COVID-19 VACCINE Information Sheet

Te Marae Ora (TMO) and the Government of the Cook Islands is working to get safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines at the earliest possible time from New Zealand.

The vaccine will be free to the Cook Islands public.



Vaccines will be free and voluntary

The COVID-19 vaccination will be free of charge and you can choose whether to get vaccinated.

Who can get a vaccine?

You can get a free vaccine if you are in the Cook Islands

Everyone in the Cook Islands is eligible for free COVID-19 vaccination, regardless of your residency or permit status. Any information collected will not be used for immigration purposes.

We are expecting enough vaccines for everyone in the Cook Islands – over 15,000 people.

Should pregnant women be vaccinated?

While pregnancy puts women at higher risk of severe COVID-19, very little data is available to assess vaccine safety during pregnancy. Pregnant women may receive the vaccine if the benefit of vaccinating a pregnant woman outweighs the potential vaccine risks. For this reason, pregnant women at high risk of exposure to COVID-19 (example health workers) or who have comorbidities, which add to their risk of severe disease, may be vaccinated in consultation with their health care provider.

The vaccine is not recommended for

People with a history of severe allergic reaction to any component of the vaccine should not take it.

The vaccine is not recommended for persons younger than 16 or 18 years of age depending on the type of vaccine and the results of further studies.

When will you get the vaccine?

The vaccine will be rolled out through a COVID-19 Immunisation programme as supply becomes available.

Rollout dates are identified but may change depending on when the vaccines arrive and what's happening in our community, NZ and the region.

VACCINATION ROLL-OUT SCENARIOS

Border, TMO and supervised quarantine (SQ) workers

We expect the first immunisations to be given out to those working at the frontline, which includes the Vaccinators, Border and TMO workers. These are workers who undergo mandatory COVID-19 testing as part of their work.

These groups include:

- **TMO** (Vaccinators, Doctors, Nurses, Health Protection Officers, Dental Practitioners, EMT and Paramedic staff, Pharmacy, Radiology, Laboratory, Puna Community Health Clinic staff, General Support staff (Receptionists, Cleaners, Cooks, Maintenance, Security and Corporate Support staff)
- **Police** (Border staff at Ports, Airport and Emergency Events)
- **Airport** (Airline crew and ground staff, Airport security, vendors, first responders and cleaners)
- **Seaport** (Harbour staff, International and Domestic shipping staff)
- **Customs/Immigration officials** (Border staff at Ports, Airport and Emergency Events)
- **Agriculture** (Border staff at Ports, Airport and Emergency Events)
- **SQ facility workers** (Front-desk, Housekeeping, Cleaners, Cooks, Security, Waste management)



It should take 3-5 days to vaccinate border workers, followed by their household contacts. This is to reduce the risk of them getting COVID-19.

Household contacts of Border, TMO and SQ workers

Household contacts are anyone who usually lives with you, whether they're related to you or not. This includes people who live with you part-time or visit your home regularly.

Household contacts will be vaccinated as part of the initial roll-out, after TMO and border workers have had their first dose. TMO and border workers will be able to nominate their household contacts and we'll contact them once vaccinations have started with more information.

Vaccination roll-out scenarios

TMO is preparing for three different scenarios for rolling out the vaccine. This is based on whether we can keep COVID-19 out of our borders or if we're dealing with community transmission.

	SCENARIO ONE: Low/no community transmission	SCENARIO TWO: Clusters and controlled outbreaks	SCENARIO THREE: Widespread community transmission
Aim	<i>To protect those with the highest risk of exposure to COVID-19 and potentially prevent transmission</i>	<i>To protect people at the higher risk of infection, at outbreak localities and to potentially reduce transmission.</i>	<i>To protect those who are most at risk of serious health outcomes and to potentially reduce transmission.</i>
Group one First group of people to receive the vaccine in each scenario	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Border Agencies and TMO workforce at highest risk of exposure to COVID-19 • TMO workforce, SQ workers and Puna workers • Household contacts of these three groups • TMO support team 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Border Agencies and TMO workforce at highest risk of exposure to COVID-19 • TMO workforce, SQ workers and Puna workers • Household contacts of these two groups • Population affected by the outbreak 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Border Agencies and TMO workforce at highest risk of exposure to COVID-19 • TMO workforce, SQ workers, Emergency Services and Puna workers • Older people (aged over 65 years) • People under 65 with underlying conditions and disabilities • People living in long-term residential care settings
Group two Second group of people to receive the vaccine in each scenario	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High risk frontline TMO workforce, • High risk frontline Puna workers, emergency services • Media Reporters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High risk frontline TMO workforce • High risk frontline Puna workers and emergency services • High risk frontline Media Reporters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High risk frontline TMO workforce • High risk frontline Puna workers and emergency services • High risk frontline Media Reporters • Remaining health workforce
Group three Third group of people to receive the vaccine in each scenario	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People in the community, including older people and those with underlying conditions and disabilities • At risk TMO and social services workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People in the community, including older people, those with underlying conditions and disabilities • At risk TMO and social services workforce 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remaining health and public sector workforce • Other population groups

Table updated 26 February 2021

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Where vaccinations will be available

To start with, it is likely vaccines will be given to the general public at Rarotonga Hospital and at Hospitals or Health Centres in the Pa Enua. TMO will confirm if any changes to venues and will issue vaccination times and groups closer to the dates.

How vaccines work

Vaccines work by teaching the body's immune system to respond quickly to infection without being exposed to the infection itself. Most vaccines work by introducing modified versions, or bits of the virus, to the immune system. This prompts the body's immune system to respond by making protective antibodies. This means when you come across the real infection, your body is prepared to fight it off.



What vaccines will be available

COVID-19 vaccines that may be made available to the Cook Islands include: Pfizer; AstraZeneca; Novavax and; Janssens.

Each vaccine is slightly different and has its own characteristics. More information on the vaccines will be made available when received.

Impact of the vaccine on our borders

At this stage, we can't advise how the availability of vaccines in the Cook Islands will influence any changes to our border controls. All safety precautionary measures still apply.

If you've been vaccinated and you're travelling to the Cook Islands

It is too early to confirm if a vaccinated person can still transmit COVID-19, therefore the Cook Islands might ask for a COVID negative test and medical clearance depending on NZ alert levels and their response.