

Protecting our communities for winter

To protect individuals and the wider health system over the challenging winter months, we're encouraging all individuals who are eligible for a COVID-19 booster and an influenza vaccine to receive these vaccinations. These vaccines can be administered in the same visit and the provider will receive two administration fees if influenza and COVID-19 vaccines are administered together. For information on the 2023 influenza season, including updates on eligibility, vaccine brands available, and ordering, please refer to the [Flu Kit](#). For information on COVID-19 vaccines, please see the [operating and planning guidelines](#) and [policy document](#) for key information regarding operations and [here](#) for eligibility.

If possible, during the vaccine appointment please schedule time to review a person's overall immunisation status and wherever possible offer other eligible vaccines at the same visit or book them in for a later date. Other vaccines to consider are Boostrix, MMR and Shingrix. It is strongly recommended that anyone pregnant is offered a Boostrix dose alongside their influenza and/or COVID-19 vaccine if they are over 16 weeks pregnant. For further advice regarding concomitant vaccinations, see page 11 of the [Flu Kit](#) or refer to the [Immunisation Handbook](#).

Note: These FAQs are prepared to add clarification for the sector on the most common queries. For clinical queries or questions please call IMAC on 0800 IMMUNE (466 863).

INFLUENZA AND COVID-19 VACCINES

Question:

Answer:

Why is the Comirnaty Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine changing in April 2023? What is the difference between the changes in March?

- 1 March 2023 saw the introduction of two new Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine products:
 - Comirnaty Pfizer 30mcg non-dilute grey cap vaccine replaced the Comirnaty Pfizer 30mcg purple cap vaccine. This vaccine is only for those aged 12+ requiring a primary course.
 - Comirnaty Pfizer 15mcg original / 15mcg omicron BA.4-5 non-dilute grey cap vaccine replaced the vaccine used for booster doses.
- While the vaccines were available from 1 March, the new eligibility criteria applies from 1 April for booster doses, as well as updated spacing recommendation between booster doses.

How is the COVID-19 booster dose *eligibility* changing on 1 April 2023?

- To protect our communities and health system this winter, those most vulnerable and likely to experience serious complications of a COVID-19 infection will be able to access an additional dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.
- From 1 April 2023 the COVID-19 additional booster is available as a winter dose for the following eligible groups:
 - Anyone aged 30 years or over who has completed a primary course or received any number of booster doses but who has not had a booster dose in the past 6 months or a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the past 6 months
 - Those aged 16 to 29 years of age who meet the high-risk criteria for a second booster dose, and regardless of the number of prior booster doses received, but who has not had a dose in the past 6 months or a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the past 6 months

How is the COVID-19 booster dose *spacing* changing on 1 April 2023?

- From 1 April 2023 the **recommended** spacing is 6-months after a previous COVID-19 vaccine and previous COVID-19 infection.
 - Consumers can book their vaccination appointment on Book My Vaccine without showing evidence for the 6-month spacing requirement. Admin teams will need to check the COVID Immunisation Register (CIR) for clients booked online to confirm eligibility. The vaccinator, as part of informed consent, should check the consumer is eligible for their vaccine. This includes confirming the date of last COVID-19 infection and COVID-19 vaccine dose to ensure the consumer meets clinical recommendations and legal requirements to vaccinate without a prescription.
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Why is the gap between your last positive COVID-19 test and the time you're allowed to get another COVID-19 dose increasing from 3 months to 6 months?

The recommendation to move to a 6-month gap after last COVID-19 infection is based on the nature of the variants currently circulating in Aotearoa and the way our immune system is boosted. At present, there are none of the original strains circulating – only Omicron variants – meaning there is high degree of confidence that any infection in the last six months would have been from an Omicron variant. As such, infection with COVID-19 currently acts much like a booster against Omicron variants (although infection carries great risks to your health). For most people following infection, the immune response and protection wanes over 6 months. The recommendation has therefore been changed to 6-months since last COVID-19 infection or booster.

When is a prescription required for an additional COVID-19 booster?

- The individual is <30 years and not eligible as high risk,
or
 - The dose will be <3 months since last COVID-19 infection
or
The dose will be <4 months for booster dose after a booster dose*
or
The dose will be <5 months for booster dose after primary course*
or
 - Using grey top Comirnaty Pfizer 15mcg/15mcg for a primary course
*See [datasheet](#)
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How can a pregnant person prepare for winter?

- Please ensure any pregnant person is aware they are eligible for the following funded vaccines during each pregnancy, when it is best to have these, and how they can be accessed
- **Influenza vaccine** – each influenza season throughout pregnancy (this may involve two influenza vaccines if the pregnancy runs over two seasons)
 - **COVID-19 vaccine**
 - Pfizer Comirnaty is the recommended COVID-19 vaccine for pregnant people for those aged 30 years and over.
 - Those who are aged 16 – 29 years and pregnant will need a prescription for an additional booster. They should have a decision making discussion with their healthcare professional (e.g. GP, specialist or midwife) about the risks (pericarditis and myocarditis) and benefits of an additional dose. It's strongly recommended written consent is obtained at this stage.
 - **Boostrix** from 16 weeks of each pregnancy up until delivery, and preferably *at least* two weeks before baby is due, so that the vaccine can give baby the best protection
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<p>When is a written consent form required for a COVID-19 vaccine dose?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is strongly recommended that a written consent form is used alongside a dose requiring a prescription. The prescriber should complete the consent as part of their discussion with the consumer about why the dose is being prescribed. The vaccinator will then ensure this consent conversation has occurred and the consumer has no further questions. • It is also recommended that a written consent form is used if a dose is administered earlier than the recommended 6-month spacing (i.e., 3 to 5 months after a COVID-19 infection) to ensure the consumer has informed decision-making discussions on the risks and benefits. • Some operations will prefer to use a written consent form for all doses and can continue to do so. The consent form should always form the basis of the informed decision-making discussion even if consent is being given verbally. • For 2023, there is an Influenza consent form as well as a combined Influenza and COVID-19 vaccine consent form if offering concomitant vaccination. It is available on dropbox and to order via Bluestar.
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<p>Are there any changes to the primary course of a COVID-19 vaccine course?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No, the recommended schedule remains the same – the second dose should be given at least 21 days after the first dose. A prescribed third primary dose also remains the same - recommended 8 weeks after the primary course has been completed. The original 30mcg vaccine will be used for this vaccine course. • If a consumer would prefer to receive the bivalent vaccine for their primary course, they will require a prescription. • There are no changes to the vaccine schedules for those aged under 12 years (including those eligible aged 6 months to 4 years).
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<p>Can someone who has <u>not had their first booster</u> still have a booster even if they are under 30 years and well?</p>	<p>Yes, the new advice applies only to additional doses after the first booster. It is important to encourage those who are aged over 16 years and have not already received any booster to have this prior to winter. This dose will need to follow required spacing requirements.</p>
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<p>If a person received a primary course of a Novavax COVID-19 vaccine, can they receive a Comirnaty Pfizer 15mcg/15mcg booster?</p>	<p>Yes, the datasheet outlines that Comirnaty Pfizer 15mcg/15mcg can be used as a booster if a person aged 18 years and older received a primary course of another COVID-19 vaccine.</p>
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OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Question:	Answer:
<p>How does a site start vaccinating for COVID-19 either for the first time or restart after previously stopping?</p>	<p>Please contact your District COVID-19 Lead and refer to Appendix B of the COVID-19: Vaccine operating and planning guidelines</p>
<p>What should a vaccinating site do if they are unable to offer other vaccines the consumer may be eligible for?</p>	<p>Consider nominating a person from your team each shift to facilitate this for consumers. This could involve booking a consumer elsewhere or referring high risk consumers for outreach vaccination. There is a section on the 'post vaccine' leaflets to write this information down for the consumer. Before your clinic starts, ensure your team knows where and how to refer consumers for other vaccines not offered by your service.</p>
<p>What is the funded influenza eligibility for mental health & addiction?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The eligibility criteria set by Pharmac are available here and include consumers that have any of the following serious mental health conditions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - schizophrenia, or - major depressive disorder, or

- bipolar disorder, **or**
- schizoaffective disorder, **or**
- are currently accessing secondary or tertiary mental health and addiction services.

Secondary services may include NGO and community based mental health and addiction services, not just inpatient hospital services.

How do providers access social media tiles/images we can use?

- Influenza and COVID-19 collateral, including social media tiles are being developed and will be available in the [National Immunisation Programme Dropbox](#). If you cannot access the Dropbox, please email immunisation@health.govt.nz
- Printed posters and brochures will be available to order from Bluestar in early April.

Will there be a focussed tamariki influenza campaign this year since funding access has widened?

Marketing campaign commencing week beginning 3 April will include information about tamariki under 12 being eligible for a funded influenza vaccination. In addition, from mid-April there will be a nationwide childhood immunisation campaign highlighting the need to prioritise all childhood immunisations for tamariki.

What is the post vaccination wait times for Influenza and/or COVID-19?

- Wait times remain the same as last year. Please refer to page 12 of the [Flu Toolkit](#) for full details.
- A consumer that meets the outlined 'low-risk' criteria are able to leave 5 minutes after receiving an Influenza vaccine. If they meet these criteria after having an Influenza and COVID-19 vaccine, they can leave after 15 minutes.

In either case, if they do not meet the 'low-risk' criteria, they should stay for 20 minutes post vaccination. If other vaccines are given alongside Influenza (e.g. Boostrix or Shingrix), or they are 12 years and under, the wait time will be the standard 20 minutes.

As an employer, can I claim the cost of Influenza vaccinations for my front-line health and disability staff?

If you are a non-district employer of health and disability staff who have patient contact and are not eligible for a funded influenza vaccine, you are entitled to claim back up to \$35 + GST for the cost of an influenza vaccination delivered to each staff member. This may include staff employed at a pharmacy, Māori health provider, occupational health, dentist, etc. This is managed through the Te Whatu Ora reimbursement portal which goes live 4 April 2023 until 13 October 2023. For full details click [here](#).

- You cannot claim for staff your business does not employ.

TECHNOLOGY ENABLERS

Question:

How does an immunisation provider sign up to appear on Book My Vaccine? Can I see Influenza and COVID-19 bookings in CIR?

Answer:

- Book My Vaccine is currently only available for Influenza and COVID-19 bookings. Find out how to sign up, get support and find answers to frequently asked questions here: [Book My Vaccine](#). Join a webinar to find out how to use Book My Vaccine to manage consumer bookings and appointment schedules. Please register using this [link](#).
- Influenza bookings are not visible in CIR or AIR (Aotearoa Immunisation Register). Providers can log in to Book My Vaccine and view a dashboard showing all bookings at their facility.

Can I record COVID-19 doses on AIR?

In the future the CIR will be superseded by the AIR and COVID-19 will be available to be recorded in AIR. In the meantime, all COVID-19 vaccinations will need to be recorded in CIR. Please check out [our website](#) for updates on vaccines available in the AIR vaccinator portal.

<p>How can I view consumer vaccination history through AIR, CIR, NIR, GP PMS?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have access to the AIR vaccinator portal, you can view all vaccines administered through AIR, CIR or NIR. Immunisations held in a GP PMS that have not been submitted to AIR, CIR or NIR are not visible. • CIR will only display COVID-19 and influenza vaccinations recorded directly into CIR. Influenza vaccinations recorded in the AIR vaccination portal, NIR (including paper forms) or GP PMS systems will not be visible in CIR. • If you use a GP PMS system like Medtech or Indici, you can run a status query for vaccines recorded in NIR. Vaccines administered through AIR vaccinator portal will not be visible in the status query but will send a notification of the consumer's vaccine information to their enrolled GP. • For CIR users without AIR access, or PMS users who aren't the enrolled GP, you can request a consumer vaccination history from your regional AIR support team. You may also be interested in onboarding to the AIR vaccinator portal for this purpose, please see our website and contact air.engagement@health.govt.nz to request access.
<p>Does CIR or AIR manage vaccine claims or inventory?</p>	<p>CIR manages inventory and claims for COVID-19 vaccines only. Inventory and claiming for funded Influenza vaccines is not available via CIR or AIR. To submit a claim for funded Influenza, continue with your usual claiming process. For example, GP-based providers should enter funded Influenza vaccines via their PMS system, and pharmacy-based providers should use their dispensing system to handle claiming.</p>
<p>I currently use a paper NIR form to record vaccinations. Can I continue to do this and where will it be recorded?</p>	<p>Paper forms are currently manually entered into NIR. This is visible to AIR vaccination portal users, and GP PMS users via NIR status queries and GP notification. If you're currently using paper forms but interested in onboarding to a digital vaccine delivery service, please contact air.engagement@health.govt.nz to request access.</p>
<p>How does a consumer take part in a Post Vaccine Safety Check (PVSC)?</p>	<p>PVSC is a survey that asks whether the health consumer has experienced any reactions or adverse events associated with receiving the vaccine, and if medical attention or days off work were needed as a result. It also asks about their vaccination experience and if they were happy with the information received.</p> <p>Health consumers can opt into the influenza PVSC survey by scanning a QR code. The QR code poster will be made available on NIP dropbox by 30 March for providers to print out and place in the vaccination space. If a consumer cannot use a QR code, the consumer can email immunisation@health.govt.nz for a registration link. Once registered, a SMS text message will be sent a few days following vaccination with the link to the survey.</p> <p>To participate in COVID-19 bivalent PVSC, randomly selected consumers will automatically receive a SMS text message asking whether they have experienced a reaction. They will reply 'YES', 'NO' or 'STOP'. Those who replied 'YES' will be sent a survey link at day 7 and day 42.</p>