



# COVID-19 vaccination – updated recommendations for 2026

This factsheet provides health professionals with guidance on those who are recommended to have ongoing COVID-19 vaccinations, and which groups can most benefit from them.

*Although Pharmac eligibility remains unchanged, COVID-19 vaccine recommendations (as approved in the Immunisation Handbook) are based on several factors, including age, time since last dose, and certain medical conditions. The updated recommendations below are based on the current COVID-19 situation.*

## Rationale for updated COVID-19 vaccination recommendations

COVID-19 has not yet fallen into a seasonal pattern, unlike other winter illnesses such as influenza and respiratory syncytial virus. Waves of infection occur as new strains emerge and immunity wanes, but not in a predictable seasonal pattern.

Most healthy people continue to have immunity – both from exposure to the COVID-19 virus and being vaccinated.

However, older adults, those adults with increasing frailty, and people with compromised immune systems have a reduced ability both to fight infection and to create lasting immunity. This puts them at the highest risk from the severe consequences of COVID-19 infection, despite having received multiple doses of vaccine and exposure to the virus.

For people aged 80 years and over, the rate of hospitalisation with COVID-19 in New Zealand is currently more than 10 times higher than those under 60. Those aged over 70 years account for the majority of COVID-19-related deaths in New Zealand.

The current recommendations around spacing of vaccinations are focused on those who are recommended to have repeat vaccination boosters.

These fall into two separate groups:

- those at highest risk, who are recommended to continue **twice-yearly vaccination** (i.e., every 6 months)
- those at high risk, but not the highest, who are recommended **once-yearly vaccination** (i.e. every 12 months).

## Key points

### Highest risk groups: recommended to have **6-monthly** COVID-19 vaccination

- All adults aged 75 years and over
- Adults aged over 65 years living in residential care facilities
- All those with severe immunocompromise  
(If severely immunocompromised, a minimal interval of 3 months can be considered if clinically indicated to align with treatment).

### Second highest risk group: recommended to have **annual** COVID-19 vaccination

- All adults aged 65–74 years
- Adults of Māori or Pacific ethnicity aged over 50 years
- Anyone with comorbidities that increase risk of severe COVID-19.

### Healthy adults aged 30-64 years

Healthy adults aged 30–64 years who are eligible for publicly funded healthcare in New Zealand can still access funded COVID-19 vaccination.

However, as they are considered at lower clinical risk of severe infection, additional doses are not routinely recommended.

Individuals are encouraged to discuss their need for further COVID-19 vaccination with a healthcare provider or vaccinator, based on individual circumstances. An additional dose may be appropriate for some individuals due to lifestyle, household, or workplace considerations, particularly if it has been more than 6 months since their previous dose.

### Lower priority but can consider annual COVID-19 vaccination

#### Healthy adults aged 30 to 64 years

- Particularly consider those who work or live with older or frail adults or other individuals at highest risk of severe COVID-19 (i.e., carers, frontline healthcare, aged-care or disability workers).

#### Children

- COVID-19 is generally a mild illness in most children and vaccination is not routinely recommended
- Children with severe immunocompromise are recommended to have 6-monthly COVID-19 vaccination (a minimum interval of 3 months can be considered where useful to align with treatment)
- Children with high-risk medical conditions are recommended to have an annual COVID-19 vaccination.

### Private purchase COVID-19 vaccine

Those not eligible for publicly funded New Zealand healthcare can consider a private purchase vaccine if recommended.

### IMAC factsheets to support decision-making

- [Comirnaty 30mcg factsheet](#)
- [COVID-19 recommendations for those with severe immunocompromise](#)
- [Examples of special groups recommended ongoing COVID-19-19 vaccination \(excluding severely immunocompromised\)](#)
- [Immunisation Handbook COVID-19 chapter](#)
- [Health New Zealand COVID-19 reporting](#)
- For children age 6 months to 4 years – see the Immunisation Handbook ([section 5.5.4](#)) and the [Starship guidelines](#) on COVID-19 disease in children.

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