

# COVID-19 vaccine: Your safety and side effects questions answered

## How does the Pfizer vaccine work?

The vaccine you will receive is made by Pfizer/BioNTech. It does not contain any parts of the virus. You cannot catch COVID-19 from the vaccine.

The vaccine sends a set of instructions to teach your body how to fight the virus that causes COVID-19.

With these instructions your body learns to recognise the virus that causes COVID-19 and use antibodies against it. Antibodies stop the virus from infecting your cells and help to kill it.

That means if you come into contact with the virus in the future, your body will have the right tools to protect itself so you are less likely to get sick.

## What do we know about the vaccine's safety?

The Pfizer vaccine has been thoroughly assessed for safety by Medsafe experts.

Medsafe only grants consent for using a vaccine in Aotearoa once they're satisfied it has met strict standards for safety, efficacy and quality.

This is the same process used to assess other medicines, like the flu vaccine.

There have been no shortcuts taken in granting approval.

The Pfizer vaccine has been used successfully by millions worldwide.

It continues to be monitored for safety.

## How effective is the vaccine, and what does 95 percent mean?

The COVID-19 vaccine is highly effective if people have both doses.

Studies show that about 95 percent of people who have received both doses of the vaccine are protected against getting COVID-19 symptoms.

If you are fully vaccinated you are far less likely to fall seriously ill and less likely to transmit the virus on to others.

It's the best way to protect you, your whānau and your community.

## What are the side effects?

Like all medicines, the vaccine may cause side effects. These are common, and for most people are mild and don't last long.

The most reported reactions are:

- pain at the injection site
- a headache
- feeling tired or fatigued
- muscle aches
- feeling generally unwell
- chills
- fever
- joint pain
- nausea.

Depending on your previous experiences with other vaccinations you may like to plan to take it easy for a few days after the COVID-19 vaccination or arrange to have someone check in on you.

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Side effects may be more common after your second dose of the vaccine.

There are some very rare side effects that are more serious, like a severe allergic reaction or an inflammation of the heart. If you develop difficulty breathing, a racing heart, chest pain or feel faint immediately or in the days after the vaccine, you should seek medical attention.



## Getting the right information matters.

Be aware of incorrect information on social media and other places.

You can get accurate and trusted information at:

- [Covid19.govt.nz/get-the-facts](https://www.covid19.govt.nz/get-the-facts)
- [Health.govt.nz/covid-vaccine](https://www.health.govt.nz/covid-vaccine)
- [karawhiua.nz](https://www.karawhiua.nz)
- or talk with your doctor.

To make or change an appointment go to [BookMyVaccine.nz](https://www.bookmyvaccine.nz) or call the COVID Vaccination Healthline on:

**0800 28 29 26**

(8am to 8pm, 7 days a week)

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