Getting a COVID-19 vaccination after having COVID-19 / a positive test.

HAWKE'S BAY
District Health Board
Whakawāteatia

How long should I wait after having COVID, before getting a COVID vaccination?

It is recommended to wait 3 months after testing positive for COVID-19 before getting your next COVID-19 vaccination.

This advice applies to:

- People of all ages (including tamariki from 5 years and up)

- Any severity of COVID-19 illness (from asymptomatic to severe symptoms)

- All doses of vaccination (first, second and booster)

- All available vaccines (Pfizer, Astra Zeneca, and Novavax)

Why should I wait?

Vaccination boosts immunity by producing antibodies which can recognise and reduce the risk from the COVID-19 virus. When a person has a COVID-19 infection their immune system produces the same antibodies. In the weeks immediately after COVID infection antibody levels are high, so vaccination at this point is not very helpful. It is better to boost these antibodies as they start to drop over time.

The antibodies produced by infection, provide some protection against getting another COVID infection early on. It is not known how long this natural immunity lasts, so getting your next vaccination at the right time is very important to get the best protection for yourself and your whānau against future COVID-19 infection.

Should anyone have their next vaccination earlier than 3 months after a positive COVID-19 test?

A small number of people who are at high risk of severe COVID-19 illness may benefit from having their next vaccination earlier than 3 months after testing positive for COVID-19. Detailed information regarding higher risk people can be found on the Ministry of Health COVID-19 web page under 'Specific audiences'.

Examples include:

- People with certain medical conditions, especially if there is more than one condition, or if a condition is serious (e.g. cancer)

- People who have a weakened immune system due to a medical condition or medication

- Older people

- Some pregnant women

- People who are more likely to be exposed to COVID-19 because of their job or housing situation

- People who have difficulty accessing healthcare

It is important that the decision to vaccinate earlier is made by a medical professional who knows your medical background and can discuss the risks and benefits. If you are concerned you may be at high risk of severe COVID-19 illness, you should talk to your GP about the timing of your next vaccination. **Appointments to discuss COVID-19 vaccination are free.**

What if I need to complete my vaccinations to be able to work, or to access certain facilities?

You may be able to apply for a 12-week Temporary Medical Exemption from vaccination following a COVID-19 infection.

If it is appropriate for you to wait 3 months before your next vaccination, and you have a record of a positive COVID test result (Laboratory report, My Covid Record, or text notification), your GP or nurse practitioner can make this application to the Ministry of Health on your behalf.

What about getting other vaccinations after having a COVID-19 infection?

All other (non-COVID) vaccines, including the flu (influenza) vaccine, can be given as soon as you are no longer acutely unwell with COVID-19 illness, and are cleared to leave isolation. This is especially important for scheduled tamariki immunisations.

Further information

Healthline
If you have any questions, you can call the Healthline team on 0800 28 29 26 from 8am to 8pm, 7 days a week.

The team will be able to chat through your concerns and, if needed, can refer you to a medical professional.

Need to talk?
Call or text 1737 free anytime 24/7 to talk with a trained counsellor.

Have you had COVID-19?

After having COVID-19, you should still get any COVID-19 and other vaccinations you're eligible for. Most people should wait 3 months after testing positive for COVID-19 before getting their next COVID-19 vaccination. Other vaccinations can be given as soon as you have recovered.