

## **Vaccination against COVID-19 for children and young people with primary immune deficiency in New Zealand**

It is recommended that all children and young people 12 years and over with primary immune deficiency (PID) receive the COVID-19 vaccination. Their close contacts should also get vaccinated if in a vaccine eligible age group.

Infection with SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus causes COVID-19 (coronavirus disease). Vaccination is an important way to reduce the risk of developing infectious diseases.

Medsafe have approved the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for 12–15-year-olds. In New Zealand this age group is now eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

The Pfizer/BioNTech mRNA COVID-19 vaccine approved for use in New Zealand is not a live-attenuated vaccine. It is safe for people with primary and secondary immune deficiencies.

Immunity occurs after the vaccine stimulates the immune system to make antibodies or T cells. These help protect the body from future infections. This means that if a person is vaccinated, they will be less likely to get COVID-19. Even if a person does get infected, it is likely to be a milder illness.

There are currently no data to tell us how effective COVID-19 vaccinations will be in people with PID. Advice is that people with PID are vaccinated according to the New Zealand national COVID-19 vaccination schedule. This advice will be updated if more information becomes available for PID.

Some people with PID might not make enough of an antibody response to COVID-19 vaccination. However, they are likely to have a reasonable cellular (T-cell) immune response. This should result in a high likelihood the vaccine will offer some protection if infected with COVID-19.

It is important that regular treatments for immune deficiencies are continued. Stopping these treatments can place people with PID at greater risk from COVID-19.

The COVID-19 vaccination is best given on a different day from regular infusions, such as immunoglobulin infusions. This avoids confusion about the cause of side effects if they occur.

The only contraindication for the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine is a history of anaphylaxis to a previous dose of this vaccine or its contents. People with a history of allergic response to another product or vaccine can receive this vaccine. They will be asked to wait for a little longer after vaccination.

A clinical trial is ongoing in younger children. This will determine if the mRNA COVID-19 vaccine is safe and effective in children under 12 years.

Those who already had COVID-19 and are recovered should still get vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine.

COVID-19 vaccines are effective in preventing people from getting severe disease. However, there is limited information to tell us how long the immunity due to vaccination lasts. Vaccinated people can still spread the virus to other people. Until we know more, it is important that Government public health measures are followed, even if vaccinated.

People with immune deficiencies who have concerns about COVID-19 vaccination should contact their specialist for advice.

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PID/Transplant, Immune compromised and other vulnerable patients have priority access to vaccinations. To book your COVID-19 vaccination go to <https://bookmyvaccine.covid19.health.nz>.

**Further information on COVID-19 vaccination can be found at:**

Unite Against COVID-19 <https://covid19.govt.nz/covid-19-vaccines/>

The Immunisation Advisory Centre (IMAC) COVID-19 Education <https://covid.immune.org.nz/> or call 0800 IMMUNE (0800 466 863) for COVID-19 clinical advice and vaccinator assistance from 8am-8pm, seven days

The Ministry of Health site <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-vaccines>

The ASCIA document ‘Allergy, Immunodeficiency, Autoimmunity and COVID-19 Vaccination – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) at <https://www.allergy.org.au/patients/ascia-covid-19-vaccination-faq>