

COVID-19 vaccine side effects and reactions

Find out about possible COVID-19 vaccine side effects and what to do if you experience them.

Common side effects

Like most medicines, you might experience some mild side effects in the days after getting your COVID-19 vaccine. This is common, and a sign that your body is learning to fight the virus.

Most side effects do not last long, and will not stop you from having additional doses, or going about your daily life. They usually start within a day or 2 after your vaccine.

The most common reported reactions are:

- pain, redness or swelling at the injection site
- feeling tired or fatigued
- headache
- muscle aches or joint pains
- chills
- dizziness
- swollen lymph nodes
- nausea
- fever
- chest discomfort.

If you have chest discomfort contact a healthcare provider in case it is a sign of something more serious.

Side effects of the COVID-19 vaccine are similar in **tamariki** and **rangatahi** to those seen in adults. Some side effects are more common after the second dose.

If you feel uncomfortable

You can:

- place a cold, wet cloth or ice pack on the injection site for a short time
 - rest and drink plenty of fluids
 - take paracetamol or ibuprofen.
-

Serious side effects

Some side effects are more serious but rare, such as a severe allergic reaction.

Serious allergic reactions or anaphylaxis from the vaccine are rare. This is why people are watched for around 15 minutes after their vaccine. Vaccinators are well trained in managing these if they happen.

Speak to your healthcare provider, doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you have any questions.

Medsafe's reports give detailed information about adverse reactions that are reported.

[COVID-19 overview of vaccine reports — Medsafe](#) 

Myocarditis and pericarditis

Myocarditis is inflammation of the heart muscle. Pericarditis is inflammation of the tissue forming a sac around the heart. These conditions are usually caused by viral infections including COVID-19, but they are also very rare and serious side effects of the COVID-19 vaccines.

Symptoms of myocarditis or pericarditis linked to the vaccine generally appear within a few days, and mostly within the first few weeks after having the vaccine.

The risk of myocarditis is highest in people aged 16 to 30 years, particularly 16 to 18 years, and is higher in men.

Symptoms of myocarditis and pericarditis include:

- tightness, heaviness, discomfort or pain in your chest or neck
- difficulty breathing or catching your breath
- feeling faint or dizzy or light-headed
- fluttering, racing or pounding heart, or feeling like it is 'skipping beats'.

Tamariki are less likely to have these side effects but may not tell you about the symptoms. We recommend you ask your tamariki how they feel after being immunised. If they seem unwell or you are concerned contact a healthcare provider.

Severe allergic reaction or anaphylaxis

Severe allergic reaction or anaphylaxis are rare but serious side effects. These reactions usually happen soon after your vaccine, which is why you need to wait at least 15 minutes. If you do have a serious allergic reaction, vaccinators are trained to manage this.

If you have had a severe allergic reaction or anaphylaxis to a previous dose of the vaccine or to any component of the vaccine, it is recommended you do not have the same vaccine again.

Bell's palsy

Temporary one-sided facial drooping (Bell's palsy) has been reported as a rare side effect, affecting every 1 in 1,000 to 1 in 10,000 people in the clinical trials.

When to seek medical help

If you feel any of these serious side effect symptoms in the days or weeks after the vaccine, you should see your healthcare provider. You can also call Healthline anytime to get advice.

Call Healthline: [0800 611 116](tel:0800 611 116)

If you have an immediate concern about your safety, call **111** so they can assess you properly. Tell them if you:

- have had a COVID-19 vaccine
- have COVID-19
- have had COVID-19 before.

How to report side effects

Reporting suspected COVID-19 vaccine side effects means the safety of COVID-19 vaccines within Aotearoa New Zealand can continue to be closely monitored.

You can report your own reactions, or reactions experienced by someone else, including tamariki (children). You do not have to be certain the vaccine caused the reaction to make a report.

Reactions are reported to the Centre for Adverse Reactions Monitoring (CARM).

[New Zealand Adverse Reactions Reporting Form — CARM](#) 

You can also search for reported suspected adverse reactions to medicines and vaccines on the Medsafe website

[Suspected Medicine Adverse Reaction Search](#) 

Last updated: 8 November 2024