

Talking to parents and caregivers about tamariki immunisation

Messages and information for school communities

Many parents and caregivers tell us that they are unsure about immunisation, and are looking for more information before making their decision.

As a teacher or school leader, you may be able to support parents as they work through their decision-making process, or point them towards reliable advice.

Safety and side effects are the main concerns that parents have about tamariki immunisation. The key messages below can help reinforce the importance of tamariki immunisation.

Key messages

Immunising tamariki is one step parents can take to protect their whānau against COVID-19.

Tamariki who have been immunised are far less likely to fall seriously ill and less likely to transmit the virus to others if they develop COVID-19.

Like adults, if tamariki are infected with COVID-19 they may transmit the virus to other people. Immunising 5 to 11-year-old tamariki can help protect whānau members whose health makes them more vulnerable to COVID-19 and can help to keep the virus out of your home. Immunisation is one way that we can help our tamariki continue doing what they love.

Although the effects of COVID-19 are generally milder for tamariki, some tamariki can become seriously unwell if they catch COVID. Immunisation helps protect tamariki against severe COVID symptoms.

While COVID-19 generally has milder effects in children, with symptoms being similar to a cold, some tamariki become severely ill and require hospitalisation. In addition, tamariki can have rare complications such as Multisystem Inflammatory Syndrome (MIS-C) that may require intensive care. Tamariki can also suffer long term effects (known as long COVID), even after mild cases of COVID-19.

The paediatric dose of the Pfizer vaccine has been specially formulated for tamariki.

The Pfizer vaccine for children has slightly different ingredients to the adult vaccine we have in Aotearoa.

The vaccine for children aged 5-11 is a smaller volume and contains a lower dose of the active



ingredient mRNA. The lower dose was chosen based on a trial which showed the lower dose was effective and had a similar safety profile to the adult vaccine, with few side effects in this age group.

The child paediatric vaccine has been tested to ensure its safety for tamariki.

]The child Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine has gone through the same rigorous approval process as other routine childhood vaccines. No corners were cut in the testing of its safety.

The trial in 5 to 11-year-olds showed it was safe and side effects were generally mild. This has been confirmed by real world data based on tamariki in Aotearoa who received the child Pfizer vaccine.

Medsafe is responsible for approving the use of all medicines and vaccines in New Zealand. They only approve a vaccine in Aotearoa once they are satisfied it has met strict standards for safety, efficacy, and quality.

The Pfizer paediatric vaccine is safe for tamariki with food allergies.

Unlike some other vaccines, there is no food (including egg), gelatin or latex in the Pfizer vaccine.

It's absolutely normal to have questions. There are people you can talk to about your decision.

Getting your tamariki vaccinated is an important decision and it's normal to have questions about the vaccination and what it could mean for your whānau. For a kōrero with an advisor who can help answer your questions ring the COVID Vaccination Healthline 0800 28 29 26 or speak to your family healthcare provider.

It's important to vaccinate tamariki, even if they've already had COVID-19.

Even if your tamariki already had COVID-19, it's still a good idea to get them vaccinated when you can.

Being vaccinated provides better protection than any immunity you might get from being infected with the virus, and can also help protect you from new variants of COVID-19.

People who have had COVID-19 but aren't vaccinated are more likely to get re-infected than those who have been vaccinated with 2 doses.

