

COVID VACCINE EXEMPTIONS

Principles of Temporary Medical Exemption

- There are very few situations where a vaccine is contraindicated and, as such, a medical exemption is expected to be rarely required.
- Exemptions should be limited to situations where a suitable alternative COVID-19 vaccine is not readily available for the individual.
- It is likely that most people who are not medically exempt can be safely vaccinated, with some requiring extra precautions.

Not medically exempt

- People who had an otherwise negative experience that is not mentioned above, with other vaccines in the past.
- Disabled people once adequate resources are available to support safe delivery. People with disabilities are generally at higher risk from COVID-19, and therefore are a priority for vaccination.
- Pregnant people. Pregnancy is not a valid reason for exemption in the absence of any of the criteria listed in the above table. Pregnancy is associated with higher risk from COVID-19 compared to the general population and therefore this group are a priority for vaccination.
- A vaccination may reasonably be deferred for individuals with some acute major medical conditions, such as undergoing major surgery or hospital admission for a serious illness.

Medical exemption duration

The medical exemption duration is 6 months, with the ability to apply for a new exemption if required. This time period will allow individuals who can safely be vaccinated, with either the same vaccine or an alternative vaccine, as appropriate, to be protected against COVID-19 in a timely way.

Criteria for Medical Covid Vaccination Exemption

1. PCR-confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection until complete recovery from the acute illness.
2. Serious adverse event attributed to a previous dose of the same COVID-19 vaccine with no other cause identified.

An adverse event is considered serious for the purposes of these criteria if it:

- Requires in-patient hospitalisation or prolongation of existing hospitalisation OR results in persistent or significant disability/ incapacity.

AND

- Has been reported to CARM.

AND

Has been determined following review by, and/or on the opinion of, a relevant medical specialist to be associated with a risk of recurrence of the serious adverse event if another dose of the same vaccine is given.

3. Unable to tolerate vaccine administration with resulting risk to themselves or others (eg, due to severe neurodevelopmental condition such as autistic spectrum disorder).

This may warrant a temporary exemption (maximum four weeks) while additional resources and support to facilitate a safe administration of a second dose are arranged.

4. Anaphylaxis to the first dose of the vaccine or known severe allergy to the excipients of the vaccine as per the datasheet provided to Medsafe.

This criterion will be removed as an exemption when there is an alternative vaccine available in New Zealand.

5. Myocarditis/pericarditis following the first dose of the vaccine.

6. Inflammatory cardiac illness within the past 6 months including: acute myocarditis, pericarditis, endocarditis, acute rheumatic fever, or acute rheumatic heart disease (ie, with active myocardial inflammation).

7. Acute decompensated heart failure.

Process for Medical Exemptions

The assessment of eligibility is not a publicly funded service. The cost for the consultation at the practice is \$70.

Only medical practitioners can undertake assessments of eligibility for vaccine exemptions.

We can't provide letters of exemptions at the practice. We forward applications on behalf of a patient to the Ministry of Health. An assessment panel at the Ministry of Health will approve or decline applications and provide exemption letters.

If you believe you meet one of the criteria as listed above, please make a GP appointment to complete an assessment.