

COVID-19 vaccinations and your workers

See what you can and can't do when it comes to COVID-19 vaccinations and your workers.

The business benefits of vaccination

Covid-19 has created huge challenges for business owners. See the latest information on the vaccine, its rollout, and what you can do to help make it effective.

As a business owner you know that a community resurgence of COVID-19 risks more lockdowns, disruption and economic uncertainty.

As the COVID-19 vaccine rolls out, and more people are vaccinated, the chances of community transmission is likely to lessen.

The vaccine rollout

The COVID-19 vaccine rollout, Aotearoa's largest ever vaccination programme, started on 20 February. The government has purchased enough vaccine for everyone, with a focus on ensuring early access to people most at risk of contracting or being exposed to the virus first. COVID-19 vaccinations are free and available to everyone in New Zealand aged 16 and over.

We have already moved through Group 1 - border and MIQ workers, as well as their household contacts. Now we are into Group 2 - high-risk frontline workers and people living in high-risk places. Those in Group 3 - which focuses on protecting people who are at risk of getting very sick from COVID-19 - are scheduled to start getting their vaccinations from May onwards. The general population, Group 4, is scheduled to get their vaccinations from July onwards.

See rollout information on the Unite Against COVID-19 website.

[See when you're likely to get vaccinated\(external link\) \(https://covid19.govt.nz/health-and-wellbeing/covid-19-vaccines/getting-a-covid-19-vaccine/find-out-when-you-can-get-a-vaccine/\)](https://covid19.govt.nz/health-and-wellbeing/covid-19-vaccines/getting-a-covid-19-vaccine/find-out-when-you-can-get-a-vaccine/) - Unite Against COVID-19

[COVID-19 vaccine rollout groups\(external link\) \(https://covid19.govt.nz/health-and-wellbeing/covid-19-vaccines/getting-a-covid-19-vaccine/how-our-vaccine-rollout-will-work/covid-19-vaccine-rollout-groups/\)](https://covid19.govt.nz/health-and-wellbeing/covid-19-vaccines/getting-a-covid-19-vaccine/how-our-vaccine-rollout-will-work/covid-19-vaccine-rollout-groups/) - Unite Against COVID-19

Start the conversation early

Research tells us about 70 per cent of New Zealanders say they are likely to get vaccinated. To help encourage your team to get vaccinated, start talking to them early, even if they're in Group 4 with vaccination scheduled mid-year. If they want to talk, remember to listen to their concerns, and treat them with respect and privacy - discussing medical matters can be a very sensitive topic.

Getting the right information matters. There is plenty of incorrect information about COVID-19 vaccine on social media and other places. Point your employees to the right places to ensure they can get accurate and trusted information to help their decision making.

They can get factual information from Ministry of Health and the Unite Against COVID websites or by calling Healthline on 0800 3585453.

[COVID-19: Getting a vaccine\(external link\) \(https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-vaccines/covid-19-getting-vaccine\)](https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-vaccines/covid-19-getting-vaccine) - Ministry of

Do workers have to get vaccinated?

The COVID-19 vaccination is free, available to all New Zealanders and it is not mandatory. You can't force someone to get vaccinated. You can make it as easy as possible for them to get vaccinated eg by giving them paid time off to get vaccinated.

If you think particular work needs to be done only by vaccinated workers, on health and safety grounds, you must first do a COVID-19 exposure risk assessment. This assessment needs to be done in collaboration with workers, unions and other representatives.

When carrying out a risk assessment, you'll need to consider:

- the likelihood of workers being exposed to COVID-19 while performing the role, and
- the potential consequences of that, eg community transmission.

WorkSafe has more detailed guidance on risk assessments.

[Assessing whether a specific role needs to be performed by a vaccinated worker\(external link\) \(https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/managing-health-and-safety/novel-coronavirus-covid/assessing-whether-a-specific-role-needs-to-be-performed-by-a-vaccinated-worker\)](https://www.worksafe.govt.nz/managing-health-and-safety/novel-coronavirus-covid/assessing-whether-a-specific-role-needs-to-be-performed-by-a-vaccinated-worker) – Worksafe

Get legal advice if you think particular work in your business needs to be done only by vaccinated workers. At present, this is likely to apply to only a small number of roles, so it will be important to take advice and document what is relevant for your business.

Employers need to be aware that existing employment law obligations still apply. This includes:

- making changes to terms and conditions of employment by agreement
- engaging in consultation in good faith
- avoiding unlawful discrimination against workers on the basis of vaccination status, and
- not taking actions which might unjustifiably disadvantage workers on the basis of vaccination status.

Employment NZ has more detailed guidance on employment implications of COVID-19 vaccination

[COVID-19 vaccination and employment\(external link\) \(https://www.employment.govt.nz/leave-and-holidays/other-types-of-leave/coronavirus-workplace/covid-19-vaccination-and-employment/\)](https://www.employment.govt.nz/leave-and-holidays/other-types-of-leave/coronavirus-workplace/covid-19-vaccination-and-employment/) – Employment New Zealand

Dealing with disputes

If you and a worker disagree about whether particular work needs to be done only by a vaccinated worker, you can access the Early Resolution Service. This offers a free and informal process to try and work through issues.

[Early Resolution Service\(external link\) \(https://www.employment.govt.nz/resolving-problems/employer-and-employee-must-dos/good-faith/\)](https://www.employment.govt.nz/resolving-problems/employer-and-employee-must-dos/good-faith/) – Employment New Zealand

Privacy matters

You have to protect your workers' privacy. You can't share information about their vaccination status with anyone, unless you have their permission to do so, or there's an exception under the Privacy Act.

Your workers don't have to tell you if they've been vaccinated. If they choose not to get vaccinated, they don't have to tell you why.

If a worker in a role that needs to be done only by a vaccinated worker doesn't disclose their vaccination status, you can treat them as unvaccinated, but you'll have to tell them that's what you're doing.

Rating form

We appreciate your feedback

Rate this

- 1 Star
- 2 Star
- 3 Star
- 4 Star
- 5 Star

"Rate this" is required

Additional comments

You must enable JavaScript to submit this form

Submit

Loading...