

Two new vaccines secured, enough for every New Zealander



RT HON JACINDA ARDERN



HON DR MEGAN WOODS



HON CHRIS HIPKINS



HON ANDREW LITTLE

Prime Minister	COVID-19 Response	Health	Research, Science and
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(Ardern et al., 2020)

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- Two additional vaccines secured
- 15 million vaccine courses pre-ordered to date
- Vaccines will be free to the public
- Medsafe processes streamlined for timeliness
- Readiness for largest ever immunisation programme progressing well
- Systems on track to deliver first vaccines to border workers in the 2nd quarter of 2021, with vaccination of general population in second half of the year

The Government will purchase COVID-19 vaccines from pharmaceutical companies AstraZeneca and Novavax, meaning every New Zealander will be able to be vaccinated, Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern announced today.

The new agreements secure access to 7.6 million doses from AstraZeneca – enough for 3.8 million people, and 10.72 million doses from Novavax – enough for 5.36 million people. Both vaccines require two doses to be administered.

The four pre-purchase agreements secured to date are:

- 750,000 courses from Pfizer/BioNTech;
- 5 million courses from Janssen;
- 3.8 million courses from the University of Oxford/AstraZeneca; and
- 5.36 million courses from Novavax.

There are multiple types of vaccine technology that have been used to develop COVID-19 vaccines. Our strategy has been to purchase different types of technology, to ensure if some are found in development or in trials not to be a successful option we will have alternatives available.

"We now have agreements in place with four providers, covering three different types of vaccine technology and we have secured more than enough doses to cover our entire population plus the Pacific," Jacinda Ardern said.

"The AstraZeneca and Novavax vaccines announced today complement our other purchases, and are compatible with existing infrastructure and storage facilities in New Zealand.

"If proven to be safe and effective by New Zealand's pharmaceuticals regulator Medsafe, they will provide broad population coverage for New Zealand and our Pacific neighbours.

"This will be New Zealand's largest immunisation roll out ever. Most countries are factoring the roll out to take all of 2021 and some of 2022 to complete due to its scale and complexity, also due to production and delivery timeframes.

"Our first priority will be to vaccinate border workers and essential staff who are at the greatest risk of getting COVID-19. We expect vaccines to be delivered to our front line workers in the second quarter of 2021.

"Our aim is to then commence vaccination of the general public in the second half of the year. All vaccine roll out will be dependent on Medsafe sign off, which we are streamlining, and speed of manufacture.

"We are moving as fast as we can, but we also want to ensure the vaccine is safe for New Zealanders.

"Never before has the entire globe sought to vaccinate the entire population at the same time. This will be a sustained roll out over months not weeks but our pre-purchase agreements means New Zealand is well positioned to get on with it as soon as it is proven safe to do so," Jacinda Ardern said.

Minister of Research, Science and Innovation Megan Woods said the agreements ensure that we are invested in a range of options and that we're not putting all of our eggs into one basket.

"As there are no guarantees that all the vaccines will successfully complete clinical trials, or be approved for use, this approach ensures we are able to access safe and effective vaccines at the earliest possible time, Megan Woods said.

"Our plan is to ensure no-one misses out, even if it means we've purchased more than we need. It's an investment worth making.

"The world of vaccine development is dynamic. While we're confident our four agreements place us in an excellent position, we're not ruling out other purchases if required," Megan Woods said.

The Government's portfolio approach works alongside other aspects of the COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy, including membership of the global COVAX Facility, which is also an avenue for securing vaccines.

COVID-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins said preparations are well in hand to gear up for what would be New Zealand's largest ever immunisation programme.

"New Zealand has never before attempted an immunisation programme of this scale and complexity. We're putting all of the building blocks in place to make it run as seamlessly as possible.

"Workforce planning to ensure we have enough vaccinators is well advanced. There are around 12,000 health professionals already able to administer vaccines and more will be trained.

"And, as part of the new National Immunisation Solution, the Ministry of Health will have an inventory management system for COVID-19 vaccines with accurate information about where they are located and the temperature in central storage facilities.

"This will enable us to track and trace COVID-19 vaccines and consumables, including their expiry dates, to reduce wastage.

"The Ministry has also purchased nine large minus 80 degree Celsius freezers that can store more than 1.5 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. They are on track to arrive by the end of the year."

Chris Hipkins said the start of COVID-19 immunisation will not mean any changes to our borders initially

"Our border remains the first line of defence against COVID-19 from imported cases. To make any decisions around borders we need to be confident that the New Zealand population is sufficiently protected.

"It means we will need information on whether the COVID-19 vaccines are effective at providing individuals with protection from contracting the virus and reducing transmission – and a gradual building towards population immunity, which will take time.

"Our technical advisory teams will be monitoring data from clinical trials and learning from the experience of other countries," Chris Hipkins said.

Minister of Health Andrew Little said eventually, everyone in the country will have access to a vaccine free of charge.

"Currently, given we have no community transmission, the first group who would be immunised are those most at risk of being exposed to COVID-19. This includes the border and MIQ workforce, the COVID-19 frontline healthcare workers, and their household contacts. This will further strengthen our border," Andrew Little said

"The aim of this approach is to create a layer of protection around the country to prevent any spread of COVID-19 into our communities. Officials are continuing to review the evidence, and monitor information about the vaccine characteristics, so we will continue to provide updates on the approach to sequencing as we get more information.

"We're aiming to start vaccinating this group during the second quarter of 2021, followed by the public, in stages, from the third quarter.

"We're factoring into our planning a large number of complex and interconnected individual strands, including the safety approval process, global supply chains, as well as lead-in times to manufacture and ship vaccines in bulk quantities."

Andrew Little said Medsafe has agreed to allow pharmaceutical companies to make rolling applications for their COVID-19 vaccines, which means they may submit their data as it is completed and ready for assessment to speed up the process.

"Pfizer and BioNTech and Janssen have already started to submit data, and timing around Medsafe's approval process depends on many factors, such as the data that companies provide and whether it meets internationally agreed criteria for safety and efficacy.

"Medsafe has streamlined its assessment processes and is prioritising the assessment of COVID-19 vaccines over other pharmaceuticals to obtain a vaccine more quickly, but there will be no compromise on the safety of the vaccine. Medsafe will remain in close contact with its Australian counterpart throughout," Andrew Little said.