

Agreement advanced to purchase up to 5 million COVID-19 vaccines



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Research, Science and Innovation

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The Government has confirmed an in-principle agreement to purchase up to 5 million COVID-19 vaccines – enough for 5 million people – from Janssen Pharmaceutica, subject to the vaccine successfully completing clinical trials and passing regulatory approvals in New Zealand, says Research, Science and Innovation Minister Megan Woods.

“This agreement forms part of our portfolio approach to ensure that we have the ability to access a range of vaccine options, if and when a suitable vaccine is developed and approved,” says Megan Woods.

“It is an initial agreement with Janssen Pharmaceutica, and we expect a formal advance purchase agreement to be finalised in coming weeks.

“The agreement with Janssen would see the first doses – up to 2 million – delivered from the third quarter of 2021. We have the option to purchase up to 3 million additional doses, which would be delivered throughout 2022.

“A key point of difference for the Janssen vaccine is that it’s likely to be a single-dose vaccine and is compatible with standard vaccine distribution channels, so it may potentially be more efficient to administer.”

Megan Woods said Janssen, along with its parent company Johnson & Johnson, have a very strong track record producing safe and effective pharmaceutical products for use globally and in New Zealand.

“This gives us confidence in their ability to develop, manufacture and deliver a safe and effective vaccine,” Megan Woods said

This announcement follows the Government's recent agreement to purchase 1.5 million doses of vaccine – enough for 750,000 people – from Pfizer and BioNTech, and works alongside other aspects of the COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy, including membership of the global COVAX Facility.

Megan Woods said negotiations with other pharmaceutical companies are progressing well.

“The COVID-19 Vaccine Strategy Taskforce are working to ensure that additional agreements are in place to complete the vaccine portfolio. Our main priority is to make sure New Zealand and our Pacific neighbours have access to safe and effective vaccines.

The Ministry of Health is preparing for a range of vaccine scenarios and how best to sequence the delivery of vaccines once supply becomes available. Three broad considerations are being explored:

- Those at risk of contracting COVID-19
- Those at risk of spreading COVID-19
- Those at risk of increased morbidity and mortality associated with COVID-19.

Ensuring equity of outcomes, including protection for Māori, Pacific peoples and our most vulnerable population groups, such as older people, disabled people, health workers, essential workers and border staff are some of our primary considerations in the availability of vaccines.