

Covid-19: Vaccinations start for border workers' families as first vaccine clinic opens



Hannah Martin and Troels Sommerville · 18:19, Mar 09 2021



Vaccinations are under way for border workers and their families at centres in Auckland.

New Zealand's first large-scale Covid-19 vaccination clinic has opened in Auckland, as health workers roll-out jabs to border workers' families.

Director-General of Health Dr Ashley Bloomfield said the clinic had been set up as officials ramp up the next stage of the Covid-19 immunisation programme: targeting the estimated 50,000 household contacts of border and managed isolation and quarantine staffers.

About 150 people will be vaccinated at the clinic each day, and authorities anticipate these numbers will "rapidly increase" over the coming week.

The opening of the clinic on Tuesday, in the south Auckland suburb of East Tāmaki, comes after the Government announced it had secured an additional 8.5 million doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine – one for every New Zealander.

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Two other large-scale vaccination centres will open – in west and central Auckland – in the coming weeks, where the initial focus will be on household contacts of border and MIQ workers.

A total of 134 people were vaccinated on Tuesday.

Ten vaccinators were on-site, including some who had been vaccinating border workers over the past few weeks.

Health authorities are also partnering with Māori and Pacific NGOs to set up smaller community-based vaccination clinics for families in south Auckland.

Air New Zealand employee James Fogasavaii's parents Sa and Luana and sister Denise received their first Covid-19 vaccine at the clinic on Tuesday morning.

Fogasavaii said it was important his family was vaccinated, to protect themselves from the virus but also to be advocates for their community and church: "just to spread the word that it is important to get this vaccination done".

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His father, Sa Fogasavaii, was grateful for the opportunity to get vaccinated: "It's good for you, guys, everybody, for your life, your kids – if you love your kids, come and do it."

Aaron Te Moananui, whose partner works at an MIQ facility, wanted to encourage Kiwis to get vaccinated.

"Living with someone who works in the borders and just putting my family in safe arms, just makes me comfortable getting this injection today," he said.

Te Moananui urged people who were "unsure" to talk with those who have had the vaccine.

"You don't know until you get here... the nurses will make you feel welcomed and feel like there's nothing to worry about."

"Whānau, come along and get the jab."

Only those who were invited would be vaccinated at the clinic, Bloomfield said.

As part of the roll-out, border and MIQ workers subject to a mandatory testing order are being asked to nominate the people they live with, and register their contact details.

District Health Boards then invite those contacts to schedule a vaccination at the centre.

They then need to present the invitation letter, to confirm they were a household contact.

The 50,000 figure is an estimate, based on four people per frontline worker – the actual number of household contacts invited to be vaccinated will depend on how many people are nominated.

Ministry of Health group manager of immunisation for the Covid-19 vaccine and immunisation programme Dr Joe Bourne said the programme was focused on building a "ring of protection" around the country.

The key, he said, was making the process work on a national scale, but also allowing for variations to the programme, to accommodate differences between communities.

The response had been positive, as those through the centre had looked at immunisation as "a community responsibility" rather than a personal choice, he said.

Matt Hannant, vaccination programme lead for the Northern Region Health Coordination Centre (NRHCC), said the process had gone well so far for the 80 staff who would be manning the centre.

He said there was an aim to make the process as accessible as possible – and information was provided in a number of languages.

Bloomfield said the next stage of the rollout was vaccinating the country's approximately 55,000 frontline health workers – many of whom would be vaccinated at similar dedicated centres.

It is expected [it will take all year to vaccinate](#) the wider population.