

## AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine

In Aotearoa New Zealand the AstraZeneca vaccine is available for people aged 18 and older who cannot receive the Pfizer vaccine and for people who would like a different option.

- **The Pfizer vaccine remains the preferred COVID-19 vaccine.** Both the Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines will protect you against the symptoms of COVID-19. Both vaccines are free.
- **You'll need 2 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine.** The second can be given from 4 to 12 weeks after the first. To ensure you have the best protection, make sure you get both doses of the vaccine.

### Who should NOT get the AstraZeneca vaccine?

You should not receive AstraZeneca if you:

- have had a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to this vaccine or its ingredients
- have had a major blood clot occurring at the same time as having low levels of platelets (thrombocytopenia) after receiving any COVID-19 vaccine
- have had capillary leak syndrome (also known as CLS, a condition causing fluid leakage from small blood vessels).

### Can I get the AstraZeneca vaccine if I am pregnant or breastfeeding?

If you are pregnant or breast-feeding, think you may be pregnant or are planning to have a baby, check with your health care provider.

- There is limited data on the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine in pregnant or breastfeeding people, so Pfizer remains the preferred choice.
- Your health care provider will discuss with you whether you can be given the vaccine.

### How does the AstraZeneca vaccine work?

The AstraZeneca vaccine uses a harmless, weakened animal virus (called a viral vector) that contains the genetic code for the coronavirus spike protein. Once this enters the body, it tells your cells to make copies of the spike protein. Your immune cells then recognise the spike protein as a threat and begin building an immune response against it. **The AstraZeneca vaccine does not contain any live virus, and it cannot give you COVID-19.**

In the clinical trials, the AstraZeneca vaccine gave 81% protection against the symptoms of COVID-19. It also shows effectiveness against hospital admission of at least 80% after a single dose. For the best protection, you need 2 doses.

### How can I get the AstraZeneca vaccine?

You can book your appointment to receive the AstraZeneca vaccine at [BookMyVaccine.nz](https://www.bookmyvaccine.nz). **If you select AstraZeneca, the site will show a list of vaccination centres where AstraZeneca can be given. Not all sites are equipped to deliver this vaccine.** If you're unable to book online, you can call the COVID Vaccination Healthline on [0800 28 29 26](tel:0800282926) (8am to 8pm, 7 days a week) to make the booking for you.



## What are the side effects of the AstraZeneca vaccine?

Like all vaccines, the AstraZeneca vaccine can cause side effects, although not everyone gets them.

**Common, mild side effects:** You might experience some mild side effects 1–2 days after getting your vaccination – most do not last long. Some side effects may temporarily affect your ability to drive or use machinery.

Side effects	What should I do?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pain, tenderness, swelling, itch or redness at the injection site</li><li>• Feeling tired or fatigued</li><li>• Headache</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• These are the most common side effects after having the vaccination.</li><li>• They usually start within 6–24 hours after getting the injection.</li><li>• Place a cold, wet cloth or ice pack on the injection site for a short time.</li><li>• Do not rub or massage the injection site.</li><li>• Tell your doctor if troublesome.</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Muscle aches, joint pain</li><li>• Chills, fever</li><li>• Feeling unwell</li><li>• Nausea</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• These side effects usually start within 6–48 hours after vaccination.</li><li>• They may be more common after your second dose of the vaccine.</li><li>• Rest and drink plenty of fluids. Paracetamol or ibuprofen can be taken but follow the manufacturer's instructions.</li><li>• Seek advice from your health professional if your symptoms get worse.</li></ul>

### Rare, serious side effects

**Allergic reaction:** Serious allergic reactions can occur but are extremely rare. New Zealand vaccinators are trained to manage these. Most people with a history of anaphylaxis to other medicines, vaccines, foods and venom can be safely vaccinated. Signs of an allergic reaction include skin rash, itching, swelling of your lips, face and mouth, or difficulty breathing. **A trained healthcare professional will observe you for at least 15 minutes after being given the AstraZeneca vaccine. If these symptoms develop after that, go straight to the emergency department at your nearest hospital.**

**Thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS):** The AstraZeneca vaccine may cause blood clots with low levels of platelets, called thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS). This is very rare and has occurred in approximately 1 in 100,000 people who have received the AstraZeneca vaccine.

**Capillary leak syndrome (CLS):** Capillary leak syndrome (CLS) is a condition that causes fluid leakage from small blood vessels (capillaries). The symptoms of this condition include rapid swelling of the arms and legs, sudden weight gain and feeling faint. You must not have the AstraZeneca vaccine if you have previously experienced capillary leak syndrome.

You must seek medical attention immediately if you have the following symptoms in the days after vaccination, which may occur together with feeling faint (due to low blood pressure):

- rapid swelling of the arms and legs
- sudden weight gain.

**Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS):** Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) is a rare immune disorder that causes nerve inflammation. Symptoms may include pain, numbness and muscle weakness in the arms and legs which may move to the chest and face.



For more health information, visit [healthnavigator.org.nz](https://www.healthnavigator.org.nz)