



COVID-19 vaccination approved for children

▶ The COVID-19 vaccine has been approved for children and childhood vaccinations will be available from January 17 at the Fifth Avenue Family Practice. With the emergence of Omicron and more infectious variants of COVID-19 there is evidence of increasing infections in children and transmission between age groups.

Although COVID-19 symptoms in children often appear to remain mostly mild, with some exhibiting very few or no symptoms, it is important to access this vaccine to stop the spread. The Omicron variant is also showing to have a greater impact on children than previous strains, with children getting sicker when they contract Omicron.

Medsafe has granted approval of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for children aged five to 11 years old, which has also been approved by Government for

distribution from 17 January 2022.

As with all vaccines and medicines Medsafe only grants approval once it has met high standards for quality, safety, and effectiveness. Pfizer has been trialled in this particular age group of five to 11 year olds overseas and results show that the vaccine produces an immune response similar to that seen in other age groups.

Side effects are reported to be like those experienced by older age groups, and may include common ones such

as headache, a sore arm, and tiredness following vaccination.

The paediatric version of Pfizer's COVID-19 vaccine for the five to 11 year age group requires two doses, at least 21 days apart.

Call Fifth Avenue Family Practice now to book your child in for their first COVID-19 vaccination. If you want to talk to a nurse about the vaccine for your child, please call to book a consultation – we are very happy to answer any questions you may have.

Having a COVID-19 plan

▶ With COVID-19 in the community there is a chance that you or someone in your household could become sick or must isolate, and now it is becoming increasingly likely you will need to do this at home. It's important to have a plan so everyone in your household and those around you are prepared and know what to do.

If you get COVID-19, the Fifth Avenue Family Practice will check on you regularly by phone, but you need to think how you or your family will take care of yourselves, get food and look after any pets. Do you have enough food and necessary supplies for around two weeks or longer?

If you have symptoms of COVID-19, you should phone Healthline on 0800 358 5453 or the Fifth Avenue Family Practice to see if you need to be tested. Always call ahead first. The most common symptoms include a new or worsening cough, sneezing, runny nose, a fever, temporary loss of smell, altered sense of taste, sore throat, or a shortness of breath.

Staff will talk to you about your symptoms and if appropriate ask you to take a test and confirm whether you need to self-isolate while you wait for your test result. You should follow their advice, and always stay home if you are feeling unwell.

If you, or someone in your home tests positive, an advisor from the public health unit will be in contact to assess your home situation and to see what your needs are. If you are not sick enough to go to hospital you may have to isolate at home. If one household member tests positive everyone who lives in the same household will need to be tested too, and if someone else is positive, everyone will need to isolate.

This means you will need to remain at home and not interact with anyone else. It's important that anyone in the isolating household avoids close contact with others by not having visitors, using public transport or taxis, or sharing towels, clothes, or personal items like toothbrushes.

You shouldn't go to work, school, or use public areas. Neither will you be able to go out to buy food or other essentials so you will need to plan to have groceries and medicines delivered or arrange for someone to collect them for you. Have a contact list of people or organisations you can reach out to – ask yourself who will do your shopping, buy essentials, and look after any dependent children, pets or others in your care?

Putting a plan together

Have a plan that meets the needs of everyone in your household, including those that need specific support services.

- Work out what you will need to help yourself and those around you. If you live alone look to the wider community for support. Services like the local church, Student Volunteer Army, and Work and Income may be able to help.
- Write down simple household instructions in case you get sick and must go to managed isolation or hospital. Cover everything from feeding and looking after pets, paying



bills and watering plants.

- Let people know you are self-isolating. Put a sign up or a QR code poster at your door or fence and get people who are dropping goods off to message beforehand and use an agreed entrance.
- Set up your home to minimise the spread. Mark out zones, shared areas, isolation areas and a sanitising area.
- Know and share your plan with everyone in your household as well as your support people so they know what they will need to do and who to reach out to if someone gets sick or needs hospitalisation.
- Include names of all members of the household, and NHI numbers, any medical conditions, allergies, and medication. Include emergency contact information like the Fifth Avenue Family Practice, as well as any support agencies.
- Put together a wellness kit in advance – face coverings, hand sanitiser, gloves, tissues, rubbish bags, cleaning products.
- Make sure you have things to help you with COVID-19 symptoms in your medicine cupboard – like pain relief, throat lozenges, cough medicine, ice blocks, vapour rubs.
- Gather things around that you enjoy and anything that may relieve boredom if you are isolating at home.
- Talk to your employer, school, and community groups to find out if you can work or continue learning from home.
- Stay connected and reach out to family and friends, neighbours, and the wider community.

The importance of keeping up with childhood vaccinations

▶ While the focus has been on COVID-19 for the last two years it is important not to forget general childhood immunisations.

National vaccination rates have fallen in the past few years, and childhood immunisation rates need to be lifted to levels required to achieve herd immunity to prevent a potentially disastrous outbreak of common childhood diseases.

Children are immunised for a range of diseases, including whooping cough, pneumococcal disease, and measles. There are five immunisation visits for babies and children up to age five years; the first is at six weeks, then at three months, five months, 15 months, and four years. Further vaccinations are available at 11 years and 12 years of age.

Some of these infectious diseases are potentially more dangerous to children



than COVID-19. Vaccination prevents the spread of these sometimes-deadly diseases and there's a danger that some of these diseases like polio, of which we haven't experienced for a very long time, may start circulating again once the border reopens. These diseases are preventable with vaccination, by helping to build the body's natural immunity. Childhood immunisations are free, safe, effective and necessary to protect your child.

Although vaccination is ultimately your choice, we highly recommend you follow the National Immunisation Schedule because these diseases can make your child very sick and some effects can last for a lifetime.

Delaying or missing these immunisations puts your child's health at risk when they need the most protection. If your child has missed any shots, our doctors or nurses can help you to catch up. Just call the surgery to get advice and make an appointment. We'd love to hear from you!



COVID-19 Booster available

For those people who have had two COVID-19 vaccinations the third booster shot is now available. Our doctors and nurses urge you to get the next shot when you can. The interval between the second dose and the booster shot has been reduced from six months to four months, which means over 82 percent of vaccinated New Zealanders will be eligible for a booster by the end of February.

Vaccination very clearly protects people from the worst illness, hospitalisation, and death, and remains

the most important weapon in the fight against the pandemic. Current evidence shows that after six months following a primary vaccination course, there is a reduction in protection against infection.

We know Omicron is far more contagious than Delta and can reinfect people who have already had the COVID-19 virus, as well as people who have been vaccinated against it. The best protection from the Omicron infection is triple vaccination. If you have had two COVID-19 vaccinations and four months have passed get that third booster shot now.

Pregnant people who had their primary course of vaccine before they became pregnant can receive a booster dose at any stage of pregnancy from four months after a primary course. If you have completed your primary course during pregnancy, we recommend having the booster after your baby is born.

The Pfizer vaccination booster is available at Fifth Avenue Family Practice. Call the surgery to get advice and make an appointment.

Start 2022 off well

▶ Have you made your New Year's resolutions yet?

The start of the year is always a great opportunity to reassess life choices, reevaluate any unwanted habits and to think about what you want to achieve in the year ahead. Remember keep your goals realistic and sustainable, otherwise, you won't keep to them.

Asking for help and having someone else share your journey will make your goals easier and more enjoyable to attain.

If you have any specific health goals, Fifth Avenue Family Practice will be able to support your plans and help you stick to them. We can help with giving up smoking, decreasing drinking, and weight management. There are specialised clinics and support programmes available for each of these areas.

Decreasing alcohol

If you are concerned about how you are drinking, or how much you are drinking, we can help.

Excess drinking can have a massive effect on everyone, including families. There is no known safe level of alcohol consumption in pregnancy and the advice is to stop drinking if you think you may be pregnant or are pregnant.

Giving up smoking

Nicotine is an addictive substance and tricks the brain into thinking you want to smoke. More than 60 of the chemicals in cigarette smoke can cause cancer, and every cigarette smoked is harming nearly every organ and system in your body.

The good news is that you can re-train your brain, so you don't feel like smoking any more.

Weight management

A healthy weight makes a big difference to both a person's mental and physical health leading to an increase in confidence and wellbeing.

New Zealand is one of the most overweight developed nations in the world and the numbers are going up. A 2020/21 New Zealand Health Survey found around one in three adults aged over 15 were classified as obese and one in eight children aged two to 14 years were classified as obese.

Call the practice today to book an appointment and we can start you on the path to a healthy weight plan.

Teenagers and vaping

▶ Concern has been expressed by local high school principals this year about the increase in students vaping at school.

Vaping has been widely promoted as a less harmful substitution for cigarettes for those trying to give up but has resulted in many young people taking up the habit for the first time. Many vape products are marketed through devices and flavours that are appealing to young people.

Most vapes contain nicotine, which can not only lead to addiction, but harm brain development in adolescents, affect concentration, and increase anxiety.

"It's a great way to give up smoking, but it's not something our young people should be taking up. The high levels of nicotine in some of them can result in early addiction," says Dr Luke Bradford.

Key things to know about vaping:

- The best thing you can do for your health is to be smokefree and vape free.
- Vaping can help some people quit smoking.
- Vaping is for those who are quitting smoking. Vaping is not for non-smokers – if you don't smoke, don't vape.
- Vaping is not for children or young people.
- Vaping is not harmless, but it is much less harmful than smoking.

If you want to know more about vaping visit the Ministry of Health website www.vapingfacts.health.nz.

Please call reception on 07 578 7087 to make an appointment for a phone consultation with a GP. A time will be made for the GP to ring you back.



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