



1 October, 2021

COVID-19 – The Facts

Fact 1: The COVID-19 vaccine was developed in super quick time because people actually worked together for once

The vaccine was developed very fast but it was not rushed.

There are a number of reasons why the COVID-19 vaccine could be made so quickly:

- People worked together globally and loads of money was invested because everyone wanted the same thing, which was a vaccine that would save lives
- There had already been loads of research done leading up to that point
- Scientists have been looking at other coronaviruses – like SARS and MERS – for a while, and researchers have been working with mRNA vaccines for ages, like vaccines against flu, rabies, and the Zika virus
- This all helped to get a vaccine made in record time.

The approval process to use the vaccine in New Zealand was fast too, but that wasn't rushed either.

The same old usual checks were done by Medsafe on the safety and efficacy of the vaccine, to ensure it was safe for us all to have them.

To help with their decision making, Medsafe also had the benefit of data from the millions of doses that had already been given around the world.

When we vaccinate ourselves, we're protecting our whānau. When whānau are vaccinated, they're reducing the risk of serious illness. The more people that get vaccinated, the stronger we will be.

If you are still undecided, please talk with your healthcare provider or someone you trust.

ka pai Te Tai Tokerau

Fact 2: The COVID-19 vaccine stays in your body just long enough to drop off some instructions

The COVID-19 vaccine used in New Zealand is an mRNA vaccine that contains the genetic code for an important part of the COVID-19 virus called the 'spike protein'.

Spike proteins are the little bits that stick out on the surface of the virus.

After you have the vaccine, your body reads the genetic code and makes copies of the spike protein.

Your immune system detects these spike proteins and learns how to recognise and fight against COVID-19. It knows it needs to attack the virus to protect it from spreading in your body.

The genetic code from the vaccine then gets broken down and removed very quickly and easily by our body.

The vaccine cannot give you COVID-19 because mRNA vaccines do not contain any of the virus that causes COVID-19.

And the vaccine does not affect your DNA because mRNA vaccines never enter the nucleus of the cell where our DNA is kept.

Two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine will give your body awesome protection against the virus and will help to protect your whānau too.

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Fact 3: You might not die from COVID-19 but you could be really sick for ages

So far in New Zealand we haven't seen the same horrible death rates that our neighbours and those living in other countries have seen. This is thanks to our closed borders, lockdowns and public health measures such as immunisation, COVID-19 testing, hand washing, coughing in your elbow and staying home if you are sick.

Our low COVID-19 rates might make you think that you don't need to get vaccinated because there is a slim chance of dying from it.

While some people catch COVID-19 and have mild symptoms, some might spend some time in our already busy hospitals, some might die, and some might end up suffering the effects of the virus for a very long time.

In the UK, they're seeing people who have a 'Long COVID-19' experience with some pretty nasty symptoms and these might last between 12 weeks to over a year.

Common symptoms include fatigue, cough, muscle weakness, muscle and joint pain, brain fog, fever, and sleep difficulties.

The vaccine is really effective at preventing death, as well as long term effects of COVID-19. There's still time to get vaccinated now before we see more COVID-19 in our community.

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Fact 4: There's only a little bit of COVID-19 in New Zealand at the moment but that will change

So far, we've kept our COVID-19 cases down by keeping our borders closed. They can't stay closed forever, and when they do open, COVID-19 will come into New Zealand.

We've seen in nearly every other country in the world what happens when the virus rolls through a community of unvaccinated people without strict public health measures put into place and it's not pretty.

We all want to be able to spend time with our whānau and friends, to go to the beach and just do normal things without worrying about getting heinously sick.

Vaccination is our best protection against COVID-19, and the more of us who are vaccinated, the harder it will be for the virus to hang around. The higher our vaccination rates, the fewer restrictions we'll need to keep the virus under control.

Besides protecting yourself, getting vaccinated is also a kind thing to do for the other people in your community. There are some people who can't have the vaccine because of their health. If we do it, we'll be helping to protect them too.

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The why: we need more than 90 percent of the Northland population vaccinated

Recent scientific modelling ¹ gives us a grim outline of how things might look with various vaccination coverage levels in our population.

If 70 percent of Northland's population were vaccinated, 60,000 to 80,000 Northlanders would become infected with COVID-19 over two years.

Hospitalisations would peak at 200, putting considerable strain on our health system;

The wait for Northlanders to access healthcare such as hip replacements, cataract surgeries and some cancer treatments would be prolonged.

In addition, we'd lose over 100 of us to the virus - likely our most at-risk Northlanders who are older or have underlying health conditions.

At 90 percent, there would still be an impact that we must carefully manage, with the number of people affected significantly reduced.

Around 4000 Northlanders would be infected with COVID-19, two people at any one time would be hospitalised, and approximately ten people would lose their lives to the virus.

Considering the potential outcomes, it is not an overstatement to say that achieving the highest possible vaccination rate in Te Tai Tokerau is crucial to protect ourselves and our whānau.

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¹ The modelling takes into account and references 4-5% of the national figures, delta variant, open borders and no public health restrictions. Research is from Victoria University and ESR published recently in the Lancet Medical Journal for the Western Pacific region.