

# Influenza and COVID-19 vaccines

## Key changes for 2026

Several important changes to vaccine formulations, schedules and programme guidance are outlined in the 2026 Winter Preparedness kit (formerly Flu kit). See a summary of the changes below and where to find further information. You can download the 2026 Winter Preparedness kit at [immune.org.nz/immunisation/programmes/influenza](https://immune.org.nz/immunisation/programmes/influenza)

### Influenza

**Influenza programme goals and objectives have been updated to encourage co-administration** of influenza vaccine with other vaccines people are eligible for.

**Strain changes:** Influenza A strains have been updated across all vaccines, including updates to H3N2 strains to better match newer subclade K viruses circulating overseas.

**Formulation changes:** Three of the available influenza vaccines have transitioned to trivalent formulations and now exclude the B/Yamagata strain due to its non-detection since 2020. INFLUVAC TETRA, the funded vaccine, remains quadrivalent. In the current context, both trivalent and quadrivalent vaccines are expected to provide equal levels of protection for consumers.

**The absence or presence of the fourth strain does not impact on safety or effectiveness.** For more information on quadrivalent vs trivalent vaccines, see IMAC factsheet: [tinyurl.com/464ca4p9](https://tinyurl.com/464ca4p9)

**Brand name changes:** Reflecting the shift to trivalent formulations, 'FLUAD QUAD' is now 'FLUAD', 'FLUCELVAX QUAD' is now 'FLUCELVAX' and 'FLUQUADRI' is now 'FLUZONE'.

**Wider approval for FLUAD:** FLUAD (an adjuvanted private market influenza vaccine) is now approved from age 50 years and over (previously approved for 65 years and over).

**Changes to age cut-off for offering two doses of influenza vaccine to unvaccinated tamariki:** updated guidance now recommends offering two doses of influenza vaccine (at least 4 weeks apart) to previously unvaccinated tamariki aged from **6 months to 3 years inclusive**. Previous guidance applied to those under 9 years of age. For more information on influenza and children, see IMAC factsheet: [tinyurl.com/464ca4p9](https://tinyurl.com/464ca4p9)

### COVID-19 vaccine

**COVID-19 vaccines have been updated to new variant specific formulations.** The Comirnaty LP.8.1 30mcg vaccine will now be supplied as a glass prefilled syringe and is no longer provided via freezer storage so will have a longer shelf life. The expiry date is the same on the box as on syringe.

**Updated guidance on additional doses.** The recommended schedules for COVID-19 vaccine have recently been updated to ensure vaccines are targeted at those most at risk of severe disease. There is a change to the recommended frequency of additional doses, with highest risk groups recommended still 6-monthly and others at lower risk now annually (rather than every 6 months).

See IMAC Comirnaty 30mcg factsheet for more information: [tinyurl.com/yc8kfpuz](https://tinyurl.com/yc8kfpuz)

### Observation wait times

The standard post-vaccination wait time is now 15 minutes across all vaccines in Aotearoa New Zealand, with the option to reduce this to 5 minutes provided set criteria is met, or to extend wait times if considered appropriate. See new guidelines for post-vaccination wait times: [tinyurl.com/ehfkazda](https://tinyurl.com/ehfkazda)

### Cold chain preparedness

All providers are now strongly recommended to complete the new 'Cold Chain preparedness checklist' prior to ordering vaccines. Cold chain storage considerations will need to be considered when ordering and planning fridge and chilly bin capacity. The new Comirnaty 30mcg LP.8.1 vaccine boxes are three times the size of the previous JN.1 boxes. Stock management processes will also need to support new co-administration goals. See the new Cold Chain preparedness checklist: [tinyurl.com/5xcc7rnw](https://tinyurl.com/5xcc7rnw)

**NOTE:** Vaccinators who are new to giving COVID-19 vaccines should complete the Aotearoa NZ COVID-19 vaccinator online course. See [immune.org.nz/catalogue/aotearoa-nz-covid-19-vaccinator](https://immune.org.nz/catalogue/aotearoa-nz-covid-19-vaccinator)