



## IMAC Vaccinator Education Courses

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### Summary:

To become an authorised or pharmacist vaccinator, you need to:

- complete a vaccinator foundation course with an online assessment,
- hold an appropriate CPR certificate,
- complete a clinical assessment, and
- then apply to your local Medical Officer of Health for authorisation\*.

Authorisation can be given to provide National Immunisation Schedule vaccines to all age groups or restricted to older ages only (i.e., deltoid administration only).

\*Pharmacist vaccinators are not required to apply to the Medical Officer of Health but should advise the Pharmaceutical Society of New Zealand that they have completed the above requirements.

#### How do I register for a course?

Go to [IMAC Learning](#). Either create an account or log in as an existing user. Register for the appropriate course online and pay by credit card.

Please note that the “Vaccinator Training Course” is now known as the “Vaccinator Foundation Course” (VFC).

We offer online, face-to-face and flexible learning (mixture of online and face-to-face) VFCs.

Due to funding and limited availability, priority access to the 2-day VFC is given to nurses delivering childhood schedule vaccines within the DHB region of the course. These courses fill quickly. We recommend that other health professionals register for the flexible learning VFC (FLVFC). There is no priority enrolment system for these courses.

#### What is the difference between the flexible learning and the 2-day vaccinator foundation course?

To become an authorised or pharmacist vaccinator, you need to complete a VFC. You can complete either a 2-day VFC or a FLVFC. Both cover the same content but are delivered differently.

The FLVFC involves working through online self-study over approximately 14-15 hours, followed by a 3.5-hour face-to-face tutorial and an online learning assessment. The 2-day VFC is held as a face-to-face tutorial over 2 full days followed by an online learning assessment.

Completing a VFC is the first step towards attaining your vaccinator authorisation or pharmacist vaccinator status.

If you have previously completed a VFC:

- but did not complete the authorisation process,
- have let your authorisation lapse,
- or did not complete the other requirements,

please look at [A4.1.6 of the Immunisation Handbook](#) for guidance on whether you need to enrol again in a VFC or talk to your [local immunisation coordinator](#).

#### Can I register for a VFC if I'm not employed in a setting that offers vaccination services?

You don't need to be employed in a vaccinating role to register for one of our courses.

However, if you are not currently employed in an area that offers vaccination services, it can be very difficult to complete the full authorisation process, particularly the clinical assessment. **Neither IMAC nor the local immunisation coordinators are responsible for arranging a clinical placement where you can undertake a clinical assessment.**

It is recommended that you complete the clinical assessment within 6 months of completing the course.

Please refer to the [Vaccinator foundation course standards](#) for more information.

### **I'm an enrolled nurse - can I complete a VFC and become an authorised vaccinator?**

Yes.

### **If I am a midwife/nurse practitioner/nurse prescriber, do I need to do a VFC?**

#### **Midwives**

Vaccination sits within midwifery scope of practice. Midwives can administer funded vaccines to pregnant women and post-partum to 6 weeks, and Hep b and immunoglobulin to infants at the time of birth. To administer these, midwives do not need to complete further training beyond their pre-registration programme. Currently midwives can also administer COVID-19 vaccines to any eligible person once they have completed the COVID-19 vaccinator education. Administering any other vaccines is outside of scope of practice. Midwives who are also registered nurses can complete a VFC and become authorised vaccinators in order to administer vaccines to other groups.

#### **Nurse practitioners**

If vaccination sits within scope of practice as deemed by the Nursing Council of NZ, nurse practitioners do not need to complete a VFC to administer vaccines. We recommend that all vaccinators keep up to date by completing appropriate vaccinator courses including two-yearly updates.

**RN Prescribers in Primary Health and Specialty Teams** do not need to apply for authorisation, but they must meet and maintain all the requirements to be an authorised vaccinator including completion of VFC and two-yearly updates, current CPR and APC. Vaccines are included in the list of medications they can prescribe.

**RN Prescribers in Community Health** do need to meet vaccinator educational requirements and become authorised vaccinators if they were to vaccinate (without standing orders or prescription) because they do not have vaccines on the limited list of medications they can prescribe within their collaborative team.

### **If I am a paramedic, can I do this course?**

Paramedics should contact their local Medical Officer of Health and enquire whether they can become authorised vaccinators in the public health area where they practice. Paramedics can administer vaccines under a standing order.

### **How do I pass the VFC?**

Following your face-to-face tutorial as part of the FLVFC or the 2-day VFC, you need to complete an online open-book assessment. To get access to the online assessment you need to have attended the tutorial, paid your registration fee, and entered your Annual Practising Certificate number into your user account on IMAC Learning.

### **Where can I get the *Immunisation Handbook*?**

This is a Ministry of Health resource available only online, available here:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/publication/immunisation-handbook-2020>.

Prior to attending a VFC or vaccinator update course, it is important to have read the following sections of the *Immunisation Handbook*: Introduction, General immunisation principles and Appendices 3 & 4. The *Immunisation Handbook* can be downloaded as an eBook onto your device from the Ministry of Health website. Ideally do not print the online version as it is updated regularly.

### **What is an authorised vaccinator?**

An authorised vaccinator is usually a nurse who has been authorised by the local Medical Officer of Health (associated with every Public Health Unit) to deliver vaccinations on the National Immunisation Schedule, including vaccines for special groups, without the need of a prescription or standing order.

Note: pharmacist vaccinators must meet the same requirements but do not apply to be authorised.

### **What is the process to become an authorised or pharmacist vaccinator?**

1. Demonstrate that within the preceding 24 months you have attended, completed, and passed a VFC and have received the associated certificate. The VFC must meet the current Vaccinator Foundation Course Standards (published by IMAC) and the course should consist of:
  - a. a minimum of 16 hours' educational input
  - b. a written open-book assessment (minimum 1-hour duration), which may be oral at the facilitator's discretion.
2. Undergo an independent clinical assessment by an immunisation coordinator or an approved assessor (as agreed by the Medical Officer of Health). Information about the practice environment, including cold chain and emergency management processes, will be collected at the time of the clinical assessment.
3. Have evidence that they hold a current practising certificate from their registration authority (e.g., Nursing Council of New Zealand, Pharmacy Council of New Zealand).
4. Have a current cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) certificate (see section A4.4 in the [Immunisation Handbook](#) for details).

### **CPR course**

You need an appropriate CPR certificate to apply for authorisation or to be a pharmacist vaccinator. The course must cover the following as per section A4.2 in the [Immunisation Handbook](#):

1. infant, child and adult CPR, including mouth-to-mouth, mouth-to-mask and the management of choking
2. administration of IM adrenaline for treatment of anaphylaxis
3. use of an automated external defibrillator
4. one- and two-person bag valve mask ventilation and mouth-to-mask technique.

Resuscitation training for vaccinators should cover the specific skills outlined above. The use of oxygen, sizing of airways, insertion of intravenous lines and the preparation of emergency medications (except for intramuscular adrenaline) are not skills specifically required of a vaccinator.

### **I have a query about authorisation, who can I contact?**

Firstly, look on the website of the Regional Public Health Unit that covers the area you work or live in as FAQs are often answered there. There will be a contact email or phone number if more information is needed.

If you still require help you can check with your local immunisation coordinator. Requirements differ between the public health areas.

### **How do I find my local immunisation coordinator?**

[Regional advisors and local coordinators | Immunisation Advisory Centre \(immune.org.nz\)](#)

## Can I vaccinate without authorisation?

Yes. You can still administer vaccinations without being authorised as long as the vaccines are prescribed by a medical doctor or nurse practitioner, or you are linked to a valid standing order (you are required to read and sign a copy of the standing order).

You will need a prescription or standing order for the vaccines you will administer in your clinical assessment.

When you are first vaccinating, before you are authorised, ideally you will be supervised by an authorised vaccinator. This is to support you to provide a safe immunisation event. However, an authorised vaccinator's authorisation does not cover you to administer the vaccines. You will need a prescription or standing order to do this.

## How do I organise a clinical assessment?

Your clinical assessment can be completed once you have received your certificate upon passing your online open-book assessment. You have up to 2 years to complete your clinical assessment. However, ideally it is completed within 6 months (this can be dependent on opportunity e.g., the need to wait for Influenza vaccines).

Once you are ready, please email your [immunisation coordinator](#) to organise a clinical assessment. You will need to arrange to carry out the vaccination of two patients (of appropriate ages) at a suitable venue (e.g., general practice or pharmacy with cold chain accreditation).

You will need to have organised a prescription or have a standing order that covers you to administer the vaccinations.

## I'm a pharmacist. What process do I have to follow?

Pharmacist vaccinators are 'approved' to administer certain vaccines; please see the online version of the [Immunisation Handbook](#) (Appendix 4) for more information. When a pharmacist has completed a VFC and an independent clinical assessment, or a subsequent vaccinator update, they should advise the Pharmaceutical Society of New Zealand (PSNZ) by email. Check with your local immunisation coordinator for any additional requirements in your area.

## I only vaccinate adults, which course should I complete?

### VFC:

Both the 2-day VFC and the FLVFC cover the whole-of-life schedule. This not only gives you a wider range of knowledge, but should you change career paths at a later stage, you shouldn't need to re-do this original training (you will need to complete another age-appropriate clinical assessment).

### Vaccinator update course (VUC):

All authorised vaccinators and pharmacist vaccinators must complete an update every 2 years to maintain their status. Authorised vaccinator must reapply for authorisation from the local Medical Officer of Health.

All face-to-face VUCs cover whole-of-life vaccination. But you can choose an update with a more specialised focus:

- Vaccinator update: Infants to Adults
- Vaccinator update: Adolescents to Adults
- Vaccinator update: Public Health Nurses
- Vaccinator update: Pharmacists
- Midwives Immunisation Update

Note that while these courses are more specialised, they include a minimal amount of content about vaccines you may not be administering (e.g., infant vaccines from the National Immunisation Schedule). This is background information that may relate to other parts of your education.

### **I've lost my certificate; how do I get a new one?**

Please log back into your account on [IMAC Learning](#) and proceed to My Achievements to download copies of past certificates as far back as 2019. Prior to 2019, certificates are stored on an earlier version of our learning database. To request more information, please email us at [imaceducation@auckland.ac.nz](mailto:imaceducation@auckland.ac.nz). We are unable to provide replacement certificates prior to 2008.

### **How often do I need to complete a VUC?**

VUCs need to be completed every 2 years to be eligible to reapply for authorisation or to maintain pharmacist vaccinator status. The update courses are available face-to-face or online.

### **COVID-19 vaccinator courses**

There are a range of COVID-19 courses available, depending on your role and workforce. [Find which COVID-19 course best suits your situation](#). To take the course, log into [IMAC Learning](#), select the 'Training Catalogue' (third icon down the left-hand-side) and complete the search according to the prompts.

### **TB, mantoux skin testing and BCG vaccination course - what do you need to know?**

This online course is available to any health professionals who wish to complete it for their own learning even if they are not going to administer the BCG vaccine.

The clinical component, supervised BCG vaccination and BCG clinical assessment, is only for vaccinators employed in a public health unit or some specialist travel clinics. These vaccinators will need to apply to their local Medical Officer of Health for BCG endorsement after successful completion of all the requirements.

Other vaccinators who would like to administer BCG vaccines should discuss this with their local Medical Officer of Health and determine whether they are eligible for endorsement, or not, prior to enrolling on the course.