

Vaccinating in General Practice under Alert Levels 3 and 4

At COVID-19 Alert Levels 3 & 4, it is important that general practices and outreach services across the country continue delivering essential health services, including on-time delivery of the childhood immunisation and other scheduled vaccines. Last year during lockdown, there was a significant decrease in immunisation uptake. This leaves our tamariki and whānau unprotected against serious diseases. It is essential everyone is as protected as possible. This may require changes in the way you manage patient access in the clinic, to reduce risk of cross infection. If a practice is unable to separate non-respiratory and respiratory appointments, then immunising in the carpark may be appropriate, if the car parking area of the practice allows.

All practices need to provide a safe space where immunisations can occur, for example:

- scheduling separate appointment times for different services (e.g., vaccinations and other routine services performed in the morning and respiratory-related appointments in the afternoon).
- separate spacing of services (e.g., vaccinations and other routine services performed in one section of the practice or in the patient/caregiver's vehicle and respiratory-related appointments in a separate area of the practice).
- general practice partners (e.g., one practice handling immunisations and other routine services for both practices and the other practice handling respiratory and other infectious conditions).

1. At the time of booking appointment for immunisation, screen for COVID-19 symptoms

Does/is anyone in the household or anyone you have had recent contact with:

- report any sign of COVID-19 or flu-like illness?
- display any signs of COVID-19 or flu-like illness?
- been in self-isolation and/or reports being in close contact with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19?
- been at a location of interest as per Ministry of Health website?

If yes for any of the questions, defer making a vaccination appointment.

2. Routinely check details

- Check immunisation history at time of booking appointment to ensure correct timing of the vaccination event.
- Check the patient/caregiver's cell phone number and that the practice can contact the patient outside the practice upon arrival at the appointment.

Please note: The following process will have to be modified if the patient/caregiver does not have access to a cell phone.

3. Advise

- Patients presenting to practice wear a face mask (required by those age aged 12 years and over.)
- How the consultation will occur (e.g., in the practice or carpark).
- Depending on practice preference, advise patient/caregiver to indicate their arrival at the practice by either calling from their car or knocking on practice door and returning to their car and awaiting the practice call.
- Adult vaccinees should have another adult with them if possible.

On the day of the appointment

- Upon arrival, reception staff should ask the COVID-19 screening questions again.

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Advice for immunisations in car parks

Options to consider:

- The practice retains one or two dedicated off-street carpark spaces for vaccinations only.
- Car parks are located as close to the practice entrance as possible so practice staff can hear and respond appropriately if the horn is sounded.
- Car parks are sited with consideration of patient privacy.
- Having a marquee or outside shelter in case of bad weather.

Directions for providing vaccination to a patient in a car. Follow steps 1—3 above as well as the following:

- Draw vaccines up in the practice, following usual checking procedures and carry to car in kidney dish/es.
- Consider access to sharps container and anaphylaxis kit. We propose making up a set with sharps/adrenaline kit/swabs/plasters/patient information to take to the car.
- The vaccinator will call the patient/caregiver in their car to perform the pre-vaccination check but will leave clinic to check temperature if deemed clinically necessary.
- Wear a mask* (a N95 mask is not necessary when vaccinating asymptomatic patients). Where possible, vaccinate from the side.
- Advise patient/caregiver of removal of clothing necessary to access vaccination site/s.
- Vaccinee /person holding the infant/child for vaccinating must be seated next to a door that can open, as it will be necessary to open the car door to allow appropriate access to the correct vaccination site (vaccinating through an open window is only suitable for a small number of patients). If the vehicle is too high or low for safe vaccination, individual must exit car.

Give clear post-vaccination advice

1. How long to wait post vaccination.
2. What to watch for (signs and symptoms of anaphylaxis) – include verbal instructions and printed guidance.
3. How to alert the practice if medical assistance is needed
 - Signs or symptoms of anaphylaxis e.g.: sound car horn 3 times and come into practice immediately
 - For any other concerns e.g.: sound the car horn 3 times and wait in the car
4. Supply post-vaccination advice pamphlet.

A practice staff member is to visually check on vaccinee at 10 and 20 minutes through car window. Maintain distance and use window as barrier so PPE need not be worn.

At 20 minutes if nil concerns, advise patient/caregiver they can leave the premises.

*For additional information regarding appropriate PPE refer to:

Appendix I: Vaccination Practice Variation according to COVID-19 Alert level changes in the current *COVID-19 Vaccine Operating Guidelines* which can be found here <https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-vaccines/covid-19-vaccine-information-health-professionals#operate>
<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-central-supply/personal-protective-equipment-use-health-and-disability-care-settings#ppe001>

All guidance will be regularly reviewed and providers should ensure they have the most up to date information.