

COVID vaccine (Comirnaty) boosters for adolescents

Best practice advice for health professionals

Boosters for all **16-17 year olds** are approved by Medsafe at 6 months after they have had their primary course. Groups considered higher priority are those with high risk medical conditions, Māori and Pacific adolescents and those living in households with others who are very high risk

Clinicians who are concerned that a very high risk patient may need a booster sooner than 6 months can consider giving it 'off label' from 3 months post the primary course.

Currently there is no approval for a booster for **12-15 year olds** but if clinicians are concerned that a high risk patient may need a booster they can consider giving it 'off label'.

This fact sheet provides guidance for clinicians making decisions about 'off label' use.

Off label use

Off label use (unapproved use) occurs when a prescriber considers that for an individual the expected benefit of a medicine outweighs the risks of side effects, although the medicine is not approved for use in that individual. To do this, a prescription is required as well as full informed consent– with [documentation in writing](#) recommended (consent form linked).

High risk groups

The COVID-19 Vaccine Technical Advisory Group provided guidance around those aged 12 – 17 years who are at higher risk of severe COVID-19 infection. Clinicians may consider offering a single booster dose earlier than 6 months for 16-17 year olds with prescription, or offer it to 12-15 year olds with prescription, as off label use. The high-risk groups are:

Those 16-17 year olds:

- of Māori or Pacific ethnicity, due to the greater risk of severe disease and hospitalisation, and/or
- who are household contacts of individuals who are severely immunocompromised (ie of those who are eligible for a third primary dose of mRNA-CV).

Those 12-17 year olds:

- with underlying health conditions or immunocompromise including:
 - Down Syndrome, obesity, poorly controlled asthma and chronic respiratory conditions, diabetes, neurodevelopmental disorders, immunodeficiencies, haematological malignancy, complex congenital anomalies, and prior to or receiving immunosuppressive therapy.

See <https://starship.org.nz/guidelines/covid-19-disease-in-children/> for a list of underlying health conditions; or the [Immunisation Handbook](#) (s5.5.9) for those eligible for a third primary dose due to immunocompromise; that increases the risk for severe COVID-19. These lists are not exhaustive, clinicians may use their judgement for conditions that are not listed.

Evidence base

There are no additional safety concerns with giving Comirnaty (Pfizer) vaccine to 12-17 year olds as a booster, but there is more data available on the use of a booster in 16-17 year olds being beneficial.

Booster vaccine

Pfizer's Comirnaty mRNA-CV vaccine is the preferred booster vaccine in Aotearoa New Zealand.

CALL 0800 IMMUNE (466 863) for clinical advice