

COVID-19 Vaccines – FAQs Master Document

Last updated: 14 May 2021, 2 pm (NZT)

Please send any questions or edits to this document to the ORD Mailbox (DM-ORD@mfat.govt.nz) for incorporation into the FAQs.

Table of Contents

New Zealand’s Vaccine Strategy	4
Q What access does New Zealand have to COVID-19 vaccines?	4
Q How will the vaccine be rolled out in New Zealand?	4
Q Will New Zealand be rolling out vaccinations to New Zealanders offshore?	4
Q Will vaccines be mandatory in New Zealand?.....	4
Q Will vaccinations be free in New Zealand?	5
Q I am either currently in, or will be travelling to, New Zealand before going offshore, before the end of August, for a Posting, short or medium term assignment, or work-related travel. How do I (and my family members who are 16 and over) get on the list to be vaccinated in New Zealand before I depart?	5
Q I am now on ORD’s list to be contacted by the DHB and access vaccination before I depart New Zealand, when will I be vaccinated?	5
Q How long after my first vaccination dose before I can travel offshore?	5
Q Can I be vaccinated somewhere other than Wellington clinics (including in MIQ)? .	5
Q I am booked to be vaccinated in Wellington and I am elsewhere in the country. How do I arrange getting flights to Wellington for that appointment?.....	6
Vaccine Safety and Effectiveness	6
Q I have had a COVID-19 infection, when can I receive a vaccination?	6
Q Once I have been vaccinated, can I still contract and transmit COVID-19?	6
Q Is it safe to receive the COVID-19 vaccination alongside other vaccines?	6
Q If I have received 1 or 2 doses of AstraZeneca vaccine overseas, should I receive Pfizer vaccine when I arrive in New Zealand?	7
Q How can I know a vaccination administered in New Zealand is safe and effective?	7
Q How can I know that vaccines administered offshore are safe and effective?	7
Q How do I access further Healix advice on vaccination?.....	8

Q What is the Healix process for reviewing COVID-19 vaccines for endorsement? 8

Q When will children be able to be vaccinated against COVID-19?..... 8

Q I have heard that Canada and the United States have approved the Pfizer vaccine for use in children aged 12-15 years. What does this mean for me and my family? .. 9

Q What age are the children currently being tested?.....10

Q Will children need more vaccine doses than adults?.....10

Q Should I get my children vaccinated when the vaccine is available?10

MFAT Approach to Vaccination10

Q Will MFAT be facilitating access to vaccination for its staff?10

Q Which vaccines will MFAT facilitate access to offshore?10

Q Are MFAT working with NZ Inc on vaccines?11

Q Can MFAT purchase vaccines or vaccination services?.....11

Q How does MFAT plan to facilitate access offshore?.....11

Q I hear that other embassies will get vaccines sent directly to their post via Diplomatic Bag? Will MFAT be doing this?.....11

Q Will MFAT be prioritising particular posts?11

Q Will MFAT prioritise particular groups of staff at posts?11

Q Will I be required to take a vaccine by MFAT?.....12

Vaccination and Staff Based in New Zealand12

Q How will I access a vaccine?.....12

Q Can I access a vaccine if I am due to depart on posting?12

Q Will MFAT cover the cost of vaccination for staff in New Zealand?12

Vaccination and SNZ staff and families posted offshore12

Q What should I do if I am offered a vaccine locally?12

Q Where do I go for advice on vaccination and whether a vaccine is safe and effective?13

Q How do I contact Healix for vaccine advice?13

Q Can I consider taking a vaccine that has not been approved for use in New Zealand?.....13

Q Will I be covered by ACC if I have an adverse reaction to a vaccine offshore?.....13

Q Will I still be covered if the vaccine I take is not Medsafe approved?14

Q Is approval by a WHO Stringent Regulatory Authority sufficient for me to take a vaccine?14

Q Can SNZ or dependants be required to take a vaccine by the local authorities? ...15

Q Can restriction on movement be imposed on unvaccinated accredited diplomats? 15

Q Can access to a host government be restricted if a diplomat doesn't take a vaccine?15

Q Can a host government ask for a diplomat's vaccination status?15

Q Is the diplomatic corps legally entitled to preferential treatment in respect of vaccines – for instance priority access or treatment as a separate group?15

Q Will I be reimbursed for vaccination costs?.....15

Q How should I record my vaccination?16

Vaccination and Staff Employed at Post16

Q Will MFAT be making vaccines available to me?16

Q Where do I go for advice on vaccination and whether a vaccine is safe and effective?16

Q Will I need to pay for vaccination?16

Q If a SEP staff member chooses to take up a vaccine that is not currently supported by MFAT, will MFAT still support and fund subsequent access to one of the vaccines Healix list?16

Q How should I record my vaccination?16

Role of Healix.....17

Q What is Healix's role with respect to COVID-19 vaccines?17

Q Will Healix be able to facilitate vaccinations for staff offshore?17

Vaccination and Post Working Arrangements.....17

Q When most staff at Post are vaccinated against COVID-19 can we reduce our level of precautions in the workplace?17

Vaccines and Travel, Borders and MIQ18

Q Will the arrival of vaccinations allow New Zealand to change its border and managed isolation and quarantine (MIQ) settings?18

Q If I am vaccinated will I be exempt from New Zealand border and Managed Isolation and Quarantine (MIQ) requirements?18

Q If I get offered an endorsed vaccine in my host country but have to leave before the second dose will I be able to take a different vaccine in NZ?18

Q If I am not vaccinated, will this impact my ability to travel?18

Q Is there a system to provide proof of vaccination?18

New Zealand's Vaccine Strategy

Q What access does New Zealand have to COVID-19 vaccines?

A Responsibility for access to vaccines lies with the Ministry for Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE) which has developed a Vaccine Strategy to ensure New Zealand has access to safe and effective vaccines as early as possible. Information on the strategy can be found here: [COVID-19: Vaccine Strategy | MBIE NZ](#).

As part of that strategy, New Zealand is a contributing member of the international COVAX Facility which includes an option to purchase successful vaccines from that facility; New Zealand also has advance purchase agreements in place with the pharmaceutical suppliers for vaccines produced by Pfizer/BioNTech, Janssen Pharmaceutica, Oxford/AstraZeneca and Novavax.

Q How will the vaccine be rolled out in New Zealand?

A Responsibility for preparing and delivering vaccines lies with the Ministry of Health (MoH). The vaccine plan and sequencing framework can be found here: [COVID-19: Vaccine planning | MoH NZ](#). The MoH has now begun delivery of vaccines to those in Tier 2, including our staff who are required to travel offshore for Government business to high risk locations.

Q Will New Zealand be rolling out vaccinations to New Zealanders offshore?

A No. The focus for the New Zealand Government is on ensuring access to and appropriate sequencing of safe and effective vaccines for people living in New Zealand as well as in the countries in the Realm of New Zealand.

New Zealanders offshore should consult the relevant health authority in the country where they are living to confirm local vaccination arrangements. NZ Inc is working to facilitate access to vaccines for NZ Inc staff and dependants off shore. See separate section for more detail.

Q Will vaccines be mandatory in New Zealand?

A No. COVID-19 vaccination will be encouraged but, as with all vaccines, will not be mandatory in New Zealand.

Q Will vaccinations be free in New Zealand?

A Yes. The Government has confirmed that the COVID-19 vaccination will be free of charge for New Zealanders.

Q I am either currently in, or will be travelling to, New Zealand before going offshore, before the end of August, for a Posting, short or medium term assignment, or work-related travel. How do I (and my family members who are 16 and over) get on the list to be vaccinated in New Zealand before I depart?

A The best way to alert ORD to your travel, and your need to be on the list, is to ensure that your GBM and sending Division are aware of your travel, as ORD are working with GBMs and Divisions on the lists to collate and send to MOH. Once you are on the list, ORD will be in touch with you directly to collect information needed by the DHB and your consent to that information being passed on. **If you think you should be on the list and have not heard from ORD, please advise your GBM/DM.**

Q I am now on ORD's list to be contacted by the DHB and access vaccination before I depart New Zealand, when will I be vaccinated?

A Vaccination bookings are managed by the Vaccination Centre under Capital and Coast DHB. ORD works with Divisions to prioritise the most urgent staff travel and provides lists in order of priority to the DHB. ORD will confirm with staff when their name been submitted and will keep people informed weekly. From there, the timing of vaccination depends on the booking space within the Vaccination Centre. To date, the centre has been confirming bookings most staff on each list within two weeks of submission.

Q How long after my first vaccination dose before I can travel offshore?

A The minimum required gap between your two doses for Pfizer is 21 days. To date, where possible, the CCDHB has been booking appointments very close to that 21 day mark. We have further clarified with Healix our advice for the required and recommended length of time needed between the second dose of a vaccine and travel.

- Minimum 3 days (to allow for any adverse effects to dissipate)
- Strongly recommended 7 days (to allow for immune response from the second dose to begin)
- Optimal 14 days (to allow for full efficacy of second shot).

In short, MFAT recommends you do not book travel any sooner than 5 weeks from your first dose, in order to allow for the necessary time between and after doses, as well as make space for contingencies as they arise.

Q Can I be vaccinated somewhere other than Wellington clinics (including in MIQ)?

A Not at present. The current early access to vaccination for departing staff is only available via Capital and Coast DHB which has vaccination centres in the greater

Wellington area. Access to vaccination outside of Wellington may be possible in the future and ORD will let staff know when it is.

Q I am booked to be vaccinated in Wellington and I am elsewhere in the country. How do I arrange getting flights to Wellington for that appointment?

A Please contact the EMA transfers team - EMATFR@mfat.govt.nz - who will arrange domestic flight bookings for you with Orbit. This team has kindly taken on this work, as there are only a small number of people who need to fly into Wellington to access vaccination at this time. If this process changes, we will advise by FM and change this FAQ.

Vaccine Safety and Effectiveness

Q I have had a COVID-19 infection, when can I receive a vaccination?

A Healix's advice is to delay vaccination for 28 days after COVID infection. The 28 days are counted from the first day of symptoms, or from the date of the first positive test in those with asymptomatic infection. As with all other health and vaccine related questions, we recommend you speak with Healix or your healthcare provider about your specific circumstances before being vaccinated.

Q Once I have been vaccinated, can I still contract and transmit COVID-19?

A Possibly, in a limited number of cases. While approved/endorsed COVID-19 vaccines are very effective at preventing severe illness and hospitalisation, it is still unclear how effective vaccines are in preventing asymptomatic infection and transmission to others. In addition no vaccine is 100% effective, though modern vaccines can come close. The more doses of vaccine are given, the greater likelihood that a small number of recipients will have less than perfect protection. In most people this will show as asymptomatic rather than serious illness, making the cases where vaccinated people become infected harder to detect. A recent example of this in NZ is a border worker who had been fully vaccinated yet contracted asymptomatic COVID-19, and whose infection was only detected as a result of the regular screening of border workers.

Q Is it safe to receive the COVID-19 vaccination alongside other vaccines?

A There is limited data available on the effectiveness of vaccines delivered concurrently with COVID-19 vaccines. The New Zealand Ministry of Health (MoH) and the Immunisation Advisory Centre (IMAC) recommend **a two week gap** between of a COVID vaccination and the administration of a non-COVID-19 vaccine (such as a flu jab). The recommendation spacing after receiving a live-virus vaccine such as MMR, rabies and Yellow Fever is **four weeks**. If you intend to receive any vaccinations within this four week period, you should discuss this with Healix or your doctor. The NZ MoH and IMAC also indicate that there are not expected to be any significant safety or immune response concern if vaccines are given closer than these intervals, so if it is not feasible to separate out vaccines it is more important not to miss out on receiving vaccines for disease protection. If your travel requires multiple vaccines, please contact your local public health service or

Healix to discuss the sequencing of your vaccines. When you are booking your COVID-19 vaccination, please advise the booking staff of any recent vaccinations so that they can set the date appropriately.

Q If I have received 1 or 2 doses of AstraZeneca vaccine overseas, should I receive Pfizer vaccine when I arrive in New Zealand?

- A If you have received two doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine at least four weeks apart you have been fully vaccinated and do not need further vaccines at this time. If you have received one dose of AstraZeneca vaccine you should receive one dose of Pfizer vaccine at least four weeks later. (Advice from NZ Immunisation Advisory Centre, 14/04/21).

Q How can I know a vaccination administered in New Zealand is safe and effective?

- A Any vaccine being administered in New Zealand must have been approved by the New Zealand medicines regulator, Medsafe.

Q How can I know that vaccines administered offshore are safe and effective?

- A Any vaccine in use should have been assessed and approved by the appropriate regulatory authority to a rigorous international standard.

As vaccine safety and efficacy is a medical issue, MFAT will rely on Healix to assess and determine whether a COVID-19 vaccine being administered offshore has an adequate approval in place, and is effective for the individual concerned. The current list of vaccines which Healix has endorsed as having an acceptable approval by a WHO Stringent Regulatory Authority can be sourced [here](#). SNZ staff and dependents should always consult directly with Healix prior to considering taking a vaccine even when it is included in this list.

Healix will consider the use of vaccines authorised or given full approval (approved) by other regulatory agencies listed on the WHO list of Stringent Regulatory Authorities. This is provided it does not conflict with a Medsafe decision. Healix will give particular consideration to the approvals given by regulatory agencies whose standards New Zealand is familiar with including: the Australian Therapeutic Goods Agency (TGA); US Food and Drug Administration (FDA); UK Medicines and Healthcare Regulatory Agency (MHRA); European Medicines Agency (EMA); Japanese Pharmaceuticals and Medical Devices Agency (PDMA); and Canadian Therapeutic Products Directorate (TPD).

MFAT notes that if a vaccine hasn't been endorsed by an SRA it doesn't necessarily mean it isn't safe or effective, it just means that there is not enough available evidence for Healix to provide an endorsement. As further evidence is presented, vaccine endorsement status will be reviewed.

Q How do I access further Healix advice on vaccination?

A MFAT has been working with Healix to set up a website to share information on COVID-19 vaccines and vaccination with all staff.

The website is now up and running and can be accessed by all staff (SNZ and SEP) at the following address: <https://healix.com/mfatcovidvaccination/>. The website currently contains:

- Information on the approval processes for vaccines;
- The list of COVID-19 vaccines endorsed by Healix and which MFAT will support and fund. This list will be updated over time;
- Information sheets on the specific vaccines that have been endorsed by Healix; and
- More general information on vaccination.

The content of the website will develop over time but it is intended to provide broad overview material rather than detailed medical advice, recognising that the vaccine situation is evolving rapidly.

Q What is the Healix process for reviewing COVID-19 vaccines for endorsement?

A The Healix Chief Medical Officer compiles a detailed weekly report on the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes a comprehensive breakdown of which countries have approved or authorised which COVID-19 vaccines. The Healix Medical Director has a diarised weekly review of this information so that any new authorisations or approvals by Stringent Regulatory Authorities (SRAs) will be picked up.

When a new vaccine obtains its first SRA authorisation or approval, the circumstances of this will be sense-checked by the Healix Medical Director to ensure that the decision process has not departed from the rigour or detail which would usually be expected from an SRA. As long as that does not raise any concerns, the vaccine in question will be added to the list on the Healix website. The time frame for that is two working days but it will usually be less than that.

Q When will children be able to be vaccinated against COVID-19?

A The short answer to this is that we do not yet know [for all age ranges and locations](#). We note that Canada and the United States have approved Pfizer for use in children aged 12-15 (as of 14 May 2021.) Please see the below question for further detail on this specific change.

There are a number of studies currently underway to determine vaccine safety and efficacy in children, but as children do not generally have severe disease following COVID-19 infection, these studies were not an initial priority. It is unknown when **further** studies will be complete and presented for review, but there are indications that some Healix-endorsed vaccines may be approved by **additional countries** for children 12 and older in Q3 or Q4 2021 with studies of **vaccines** for younger children due to finish in 2022.

When an SRA approves a vaccine for children, the process for Healix endorsement will be the same as for any other vaccine:

- Approval by a WHO Stringent Regulatory Authority
- Review by Healix medical staff
- Endorsement or not by Healix, with subsequent updates placed on the Healix COVID-19 vaccine website ([link here](#))

In coming months, vaccine availability for children will likely be confusing and subject to rapid change, with different vaccines approved for use in different age groups across different countries. Due to this complexity it will not be feasible for Healix to maintain detailed vaccine access information for children on its MFAT website as it would quickly be out of date. For questions regarding vaccine access for children, please call the Healix vaccine advice line where the most up-to-date information will be available.

Q I have heard that Canada and the United States have approved the Pfizer vaccine for use in children aged 12-15 years. What does this mean for me and my family?

A Canada and the United States' approval of Pfizer for children in this age bracket was granted after reviewing the latest evidence available on its efficacy and safety, which Pfizer provided to a limited number of WHO SRAs in April 2021. We expect other countries to follow suit soon. In light of these decisions Healix's advice **has shifted to endorsing vaccination with Pfizer for those aged 12-15 where it is available.** As such, we recommend the same approach to vaccination as we do for all SNZ staff and family, to contact Healix for advice on vaccination specific to your circumstances. For SEP staff who have children aged 12-15, we recommend seeking advice from your primary healthcare provider.

While Medsafe (New Zealand's regulatory authority,) has not yet approved Pfizer for those under 16, that current parameter has been set based on a lack of information, rather than a decision **not** to endorse use for reasons of safety or efficacy. In the event that Medsafe issued a decision that contradicted that of a WHO SRA, MFAT would then align our advice to Medsafe's decision, but in the absence of a decision either way, Healix will continue to make its endorsements on the basis of the review of decisions made by WHO SRAs.

Q What age are the children currently being tested?

A While COVID-19 tends to be a very mild disease in children, older kids are slightly more at risk of severe illness. They also socialise more and are therefore more of a risk for transmitting the disease. For these reasons the first vaccine tests for children have focused upon 12-17 year olds, with results **under review now**. Studies on younger children and infants will take longer to complete, and thus any potential vaccine access is also likely to be delayed into 2022 or beyond.

Q Will children need more vaccine doses than adults?

A Current studies suggest that the number of doses needed in children 12 and up will be similar to adults. Very young children may require additional doses or vaccination may be delayed until the child is old enough for the immune system to respond properly, just as occurs now with many childhood vaccines, but this is still to be determined.

Q Should I get my children vaccinated when the vaccine is available?

A COVID-19 vaccines will not be available for children until they have been proven safe and effective in this population. If you are deploying/returning to a location with COVID-19 transmission in the community, vaccination for you and your eligible family members is recommended. Specific individual health questions should be reviewed with your GP or with Healix.

MFAT Approach to Vaccination

Q Will MFAT be facilitating access to vaccination for its staff?

A Yes, wherever possible. MFAT will endeavour to facilitate access to safe and effective vaccines for all SNZ staff and dependants and SEP staff as early as is feasible while working within local and New Zealand policy and regulatory settings. The distribution and sequencing of vaccines included in New Zealand's advance purchase agreements is being planned by the MoH. However, MFAT is working with the MoH to ensure that the needs of staff in the offshore network are considered in planning and sequencing and we will provide further information on this aspect in due course.

There are no current plans to arrange COVID-19 vaccination for staff in New Zealand. Vaccines in New Zealand will be administered according to the MoH vaccine sequencing framework.

Q Which vaccines will MFAT facilitate access to offshore?

A MFAT will only facilitate access to vaccines which have both an approval by an agency on the WHO list of Stringent Regulatory Authorities and which are [endorsed by Healix](#).

Q Are MFAT working with NZ Inc on vaccines?

A Yes. NZ Inc is working closely to promote policy alignment and ensure that any vaccines access opportunities are made available to all of NZ Inc.

Q Can MFAT purchase vaccines or vaccination services?

Not currently. Globally, the purchase and rollout of COVID-19 vaccines is being managed by governments via large pre-purchase agreements which can absorb all available supply. Private purchase of vaccine is not expected to be a widespread option for some time.

Q How does MFAT plan to facilitate access offshore?

A The needs and options available vary widely across the network. MFAT will be looking at a range of options relevant to different regions and posts. We will be advocating for the inclusion of foreign nationals (including diplomats) in partner country vaccination programmes. We are in discussion with other foreign ministries about respective plans and options to cooperate. We are exploring the potential for vaccination of some SNZ staff when on business or leave in New Zealand.

For many posts, the most viable option will be to access safe and effective vaccinations locally when they become available. MFAT will be working to support posts to gain such access where the vaccines are assessed as safe and effective.

Q I hear that other embassies will get vaccines sent directly to their post via Diplomatic Bag? Will MFAT be doing this?

A Due to the complex logistics, temperature control, supply chain management, and local regulatory permissions required for vaccine shipping and administration, it is unlikely that this is a technically feasible option for MFAT. However this will be further assessed as available vaccines and Post contexts change.

Q Will MFAT be prioritising particular posts?

A MFAT will prioritise efforts to facilitate vaccine access for posts where risks are highest. However, timing of access may also depend on the timing of locally available options in different locations.

Q Will MFAT prioritise particular groups of staff at posts?

A MFAT will be working to facilitate access to vaccines for all offshore staff, SNZ and SEP, as all are our employees and all are required to sustain the network. However, the timing and nature of access may be different for different staff at a post. For example, local vaccinations in country may be available to SEP but not SNZ; while SNZ staff travelling to New Zealand may be able to access a vaccine before it is available for SEP. MFAT will retain flexibility to support partial options as they arise.

Any New Zealand sourced vaccinations will need to meet the Ministry of Health's sequencing priorities.

Q Will I be required to take a vaccine by MFAT?

- A No. Staff are encouraged to be vaccinated when safe and effective vaccinations are available and accessible, but no staff will be required to be vaccinated.

As vaccination becomes more widely available, MFAT may need to consider the risk and implications of posting staff without vaccination to areas where COVID-19 prevalence is high.

Vaccination and Staff Based in New Zealand

Q How will I access a vaccine?

- A Staff based in New Zealand and not due to go on posting should access vaccinations in the same manner as other New Zealanders according to the Ministry of Health's vaccine sequencing framework.

When vaccines become widely available, the Ministry may consider whether there is a benefit to be gained from facilitating access to staff such as is currently undertaken for flu vaccinations.

Q Can I access a vaccine if I am due to depart on posting?

- A MFAT will facilitate access to COVID-19 vaccination for staff who are due to go on posting once these are available and accessible under the New Zealand vaccination programme and sequencing framework and as part of normal pre-posting health procedures. Please see questions relating to pre-departure vaccination under the 'Vaccine Strategy in New Zealand' section above.

Q Will MFAT cover the cost of vaccination for staff in New Zealand?

- A No, as there is no need. The New Zealand Government has confirmed that vaccinations for New Zealanders will be provided free of charge under the domestic immunisation programme.

Vaccination and SNZ staff and families posted offshore

Q What should I do if I am offered a vaccine locally?

- A SNZ staff who are offered a vaccine locally should seek medical advice (primarily Healix) with respect to the vaccine approval status, safety and efficacy, and whether it is recommended for their particular circumstances.

MFAT is not a medical agency and will not assess or recommend particular vaccines.

Q Where do I go for advice on vaccination and whether a vaccine is safe and effective?

- A SNZ staff and families should contact Healix to seek advice on COVID-19 vaccination issues including whether a particular vaccine can be considered safe and effective.

Q How do I contact Healix for vaccine advice?

- A Healix operates a dedicated COVID-19 vaccine email and phone service for advice to SNZ staff and dependents. SNZ staff and families can contact the **COVID-19 Vaccine Advice Email** service by emailing: CovidVaccineEnquiries-MFAT@healix.com. We encourage SNZ staff to use the email option. As the service is new and demand is not yet clear, Healix anticipate that it may take two working days to respond to a query. Should the query be urgent, please make that clear in the email subject.

SNZ staff and families can also access the **COVID-19 Vaccine Advice Phone Line** by calling the normal Healix phone number +64 (0) 9 477 4410 and selecting option 4. The phone line will operate during UK working hours (0900 to 1700 GMT Monday to Friday) which means posts outside the Europe time zone will need to consider when they call. We note that not all posts will have working hour overlap with the phone line operating hours and some will need to call in the evening or early morning. We will assess phone line hours as we test demand and accessibility.

Q Can I consider taking a vaccine that has not been approved for use in New Zealand?

- A Yes, on advice from Healix. Medsafe is only expected to progress approvals for vaccines that are likely to be delivered in New Zealand. This will not include all vaccines that may be safe and effective. It is important that any vaccine has been subject to adequate assessment and approval prior to use.

SNZ staff should contact Healix for advice on the safety and efficacy of particular vaccines prior to taking up a vaccination opportunity. Healix is not limited to recommending Medsafe-approved vaccines.

Q Will I be covered by ACC if I have an adverse reaction to a vaccine offshore?

- A The following comments are for your guidance; if you have specific questions about coverage please contact ACC directly.

SNZ staff and recognised partners and dependants are covered by Healix whilst offshore, but can make claims to ACC if they suffer a personal injury while posted which requires treatment on return. This includes "treatment injury" following an adverse reaction to a vaccine.

Please note that all ACC claims are considered on a case-by-case basis so there is no automatic coverage.

In general, treatment injury suffered off-shore is covered if:

- a. The treatment is given by a person who has qualifications **equivalent to those of a NZ registered health professional**, AND
- b. The injury would be considered **treatment injury** in New Zealand, AND
- c. The person is **ordinarily resident** in New Zealand when the treatment is given.

SNZ may lose their ACC cover if:

- the treatment injury happens after they go on to work in an off-shore role that is not related to New Zealand OR
- they do not intend to reside in New Zealand long-term after the end of their posting OR
- they remain offshore six months after their last NZ-based employment.

SNZ partners and dependants not ordinarily resident in NZ would not be covered by ACC. Specific requirements for SNZ partners and dependants to make an ACC claim are that the partner/dependant:

- be intending to reside in NZ, AND
- return to reside in NZ within 6 months of the staff member returning to reside.

A SNZ partner or dependant will lose their cover if:

- the seconded staff member is no longer entitled, OR
- the partner or dependant remains offshore six months after the seconded staff member's last NZ-based employment.

It is emphasized that each person's situation is fact dependent and will be considered by ACC on its merits

Q Will I still be covered if the vaccine I take is not Medsafe approved?

A As above, advice from ACC is specific on the importance that the vaccine is recommended by a qualified medical professional and similarly administered by a qualified medical professional. ACC advice does not specify requirements for the regulatory approval of the medicine.

MFAT's advice is consistent that all staff should only take a vaccine on the basis of medical advice. For SNZ staff that should be sought from Healix.

Q Is approval by a WHO Stringent Regulatory Authority sufficient for me to take a vaccine?

No. Any vaccine facilitated by MFAT also needs to be endorsed by Healix and complemented by specific medical advice on whether the vaccine, under its current approval, is recommended for the particular individual.

Healix can provide advice on the approval in place for particular vaccines and their suitability.

Q Can SNZ or dependants be required to take a vaccine by the local authorities?

A Provided you are in country as an accredited diplomat, the Vienna Convention provisions on inviolability mean you cannot be forced to take a vaccine. SNZ staff facing such a circumstance should immediately contact PRD.

Q Can restriction on movement be imposed on unvaccinated accredited diplomats?

A No. Freedom of movement is protected under the Vienna Conventions, subject to national security. However, some states have considered the pandemic a matter of national security. New Zealand does not agree with this interpretation. If you face any difficulties, please get in touch with PRD.

Q Can access to a host government be restricted if a diplomat doesn't take a vaccine?

A Yes. There is no obligation for a receiving state to provide access to its Government. If facing such restrictions Posts should notify PRD.

Q Can a host government ask for a diplomat's vaccination status?

A If you are an accredited diplomat then you are not obliged to provide your medical information to the host country. Please contact PRD if you are approached with this query and you'd prefer to say no.

This is likely to be an evolving issue as a range of governments and other entities consider mechanisms to record and verify vaccination and whether these are used to restrict access in a range of settings.

Q Is the diplomatic corps legally entitled to preferential treatment in respect of vaccines – for instance priority access or treatment as a separate group?

A No. There is no obligation under the Vienna Conventions on the state you're in to provide preferential treatment with respect to vaccines.

Q Will I be reimbursed for vaccination costs?

A Yes. Provided you receive a vaccine recommended by Healix and which has been approved by Medsafe or has been endorsed by Healix as having an acceptable approval by one of the authorities included on the WHO list of Stringent Regulatory Authorities, the Ministry will reimburse the direct cost of vaccination through the standard Healix process.

Q How should I record my vaccination?

- A SNZ staff should request to have their vaccine recorded by the administering physician or agency in one of the WHO 'yellow card' booklets that record vaccination details and dates.

MFAT requests that SNZ staff and recognised partners and dependants confirm vaccination details with Healix so that they can be recorded against your medical file.

Vaccination and Staff Employed at Post

Q Will MFAT be making vaccines available to me?

- A While MFAT will include all post staff in analysis and planning, it is not clear to what extent MFAT will be able to facilitate vaccinations for SEP at post. Staff with options to receive safe and effective vaccination locally should not wait for an MFAT delivered process.

Q Where do I go for advice on vaccination and whether a vaccine is safe and effective?

- A SEP staff should seek information on local vaccination options and vaccines from the relevant authority or their medical provider.

SEP staff have access to the Healix prepared website with a range of information about vaccination and vaccines (<https://healix.com/mfatcovidvaccination>).

Q Will I need to pay for vaccination?

- A No, although this may depend on the particular vaccine. Where there is a vaccination charge, MFAT will reimburse the direct cost of vaccination for SEP staff provided the vaccine is one that has been approved by an SRA and is endorsed by Healix.

Q If a SEP staff member chooses to take up a vaccine that is not currently supported by MFAT, will MFAT still support and fund subsequent access to one of the vaccines Healix list?

- A Yes, where and when this is feasible. Our aim is to support all staff to gain access to a vaccine on the Healix list. Medical advice is that receiving multiple vaccines is not problematic, but as always, staff should discuss this with the medical professional administering the vaccine.

Q How should I record my vaccination?

- A We recommend that SEP staff request to have their vaccine recorded by the administering physician or agency in one of the WHO 'yellow card' booklets that record vaccination details and dates.

Role of Healix

Q What is Healix's role with respect to COVID-19 vaccines?

A Healix's role with respect to COVID-19 vaccines is essentially the same as its normal role providing health services to SNZ staff and recognised dependants posted offshore. Healix will provide advice on safe and effective vaccines, make recommendations and referrals to appropriate vaccination providers, and cover the cost of receiving approved vaccines where available/applicable.

Q Will Healix be able to facilitate vaccinations for staff offshore?

A At present (February 2021) Healix is not able to arrange for staff in the offshore network to be vaccinated as all contracts for vaccine supplies are with public agencies and governments who are sequencing access according to their particular public health priorities.

This may change depending on local policy on vaccine approval and access priorities as vaccines become more generally available over time.

Vaccination and Post Working Arrangements

Q When most staff at Post are vaccinated against COVID-19 can we reduce our level of precautions in the workplace?

A: No. Unfortunately there are key things which we need to know about COVID-19 vaccines before changing our levels of restrictions that won't be clear for months yet. Most important is if the vaccines stop people from transmitting the virus. We know they are great at preventing serious COVID-19 disease and mortality, but we do not know how likely it is for vaccinated people to become infected with mild, potentially transmissible illness. Prevention of transmission is very hard to test for, and will only be accurately assessed in retrospect if infection levels drop after vaccination. The impact of viral variants on vaccination is still being assessed as well, though currently approved vaccines have shown to be effective at preventing serious disease from the variant strains.

Because of this, we do not know how much of an infection threat vaccinated people are to those who can't or haven't yet been vaccinated. With this in mind, the level of disease mitigation measures at posts need to be based on the local prevalence of COVID-19 disease, and need to be changed only conservatively. Some people may choose to disregard disease mitigation measures once vaccinations are available, and this could easily lead to rising local case numbers once again.

It is predicted from early results that vaccination will sharply reduce local disease prevalence, and if this happens posts should review their settings. This advice will be updated once we know more. For now, a very cautious approach is recommended for staff and posts, even after vaccination.

Vaccines and Travel, Borders and MIQ

Q Will the arrival of vaccinations allow New Zealand to change its border and managed isolation and quarantine (MIQ) settings?

A Not at this point in time. There is insufficient trial data to confirm whether people who have been vaccinated with particular vaccines may still carry and transmit the virus. It is therefore too early to consider implications for the border and MIQ and New Zealand has no current plans to reduce the border or MIQ requirements based on evidence of vaccination.

Q If I am vaccinated will I be exempt from New Zealand border and Managed Isolation and Quarantine (MIQ) requirements?

A No. As noted above, there is currently insufficient information to consider changes or exemptions from New Zealand's current border and MIQ requirements which remain critical to our elimination approach.

Q If I get offered an endorsed vaccine in my host country but have to leave before the second dose will I be able to take a different vaccine in NZ?

A Yes, when vaccines are accessible in New Zealand. One dose does confer some temporary protection so the first dose is still valuable. There is no current evidence that taking a first dose of one vaccine and then one or two doses of another will cause any problems. You should, however, always talk to your medical professional first and you need to tell the second vaccinator about the first vaccine.

Q If I am not vaccinated, will this impact my ability to travel?

A The link between vaccination, means to prove vaccination, efficacy of vaccination in preventing transmission and the requirements for travel or border entry remain unclear. Governments including New Zealand are engaged in work to consider those links. It is possible that some governments or airlines will bring in travel or entry requirements related to vaccines and the Ministry will be monitoring any such developments closely.

Entry to New Zealand is not linked to COVID-19 vaccination.

Q Is there a system to provide proof of vaccination?

A Currently there is no agreed international system to record and prove receipt of a COVID-19 vaccine. This is a matter under active consideration by governments and by the World Health Organisation.

In New Zealand, vaccinations will be recorded via the national immunisation register. Any SNZ staff off shore are requested to register any vaccine taken with Healix.