

September 2021

We appreciate that the recent covid-19 situation has been stressful for many, and as a practice wanted to take this opportunity to share the answers to some questions we have recently been asked. We appreciate that in the current climate people require access to good quality information, to reduce the spread of misinformation, and to improve health outcomes for our community.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Can I please get a vaccine exemption?**

Our practice strongly supports covid-19 vaccination. We encourage all our patients to get vaccinated to protect themselves, their loved ones and the wider community. We *do not* provide covid-19 vaccination exemptions.

There are two medical instances where we consult with specialists regarding vaccination safety – these two instances are if someone has had anaphylaxis to a previous dose of the Pfizer-mRNA vaccination; or if someone has a history of myocarditis or pericarditis attributable to the first dose of the Pfizer-mRNA vaccination. In these cases we work with specialists and patients to determine the safest course of action.

We do recommend that if you are unwell or have a fever (>38 degrees Celsius) at the time of vaccination that you defer vaccination until you are no longer feverish or unwell.

If you have a history of anaphylaxis then you can still get vaccinated, you just need to let the vaccinators know and be observed for a longer period.

If you are diabetic you can still get vaccinated. Please be aware that the covid-19 vaccination may change your blood sugar levels (they may be slightly lower or higher) and need to be monitored closely for 48 hours. We suggest you take your blood glucose meter to your vaccination appointment and a fast-acting carbohydrate (e.g. a small box of fruit juice) in case you develop hypoglycaemia, and that you let your vaccinator know that you have diabetes. Afterwards you need to stay hydrated, monitor your blood sugar levels for 48 hours, and use your sick day plan if you become unwell.

Some people are concerned that pre-existing medical conditions (e.g. asthma, heart disease, being immunocompromised) puts them at higher risk from vaccination. In fact, data suggests that you are at higher risk from covid-19, and that *vaccination is more important* for you to stay safe. We strongly encourage you to get vaccinated.

### **Can I please get an exemption from mask wearing?**

As a practice we agree with the guidelines from the government regarding wearing masks at various alert levels, to reduce community transmission of covid-19.

We understand that initially it can be uncomfortable getting used to wearing masks. However, over time people often find that their initial discomfort lessens significantly.

There is no evidence to suggest that mask wearing reduces blood oxygen levels. In fact, there has been some research suggesting that wearing a mask while exercising, for most active patients, is safe and does not impact their physiological response or performance. Please have a look at the following article for some more information regarding this -

<https://www.axissportsmedicine.co.nz/blog/is-exercising-while-wearing-a-mask-safe-and-practical>

In some cases, there are significant medical conditions, disabilities, or needing a mask to be removed for communication, which preclude mask wearing. However, people do not need a medical certificate for this exemption.

Our current guidelines from the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners (RNZCGP) suggest that *'exemptions are self-declared, with no formal paperwork required. People who will have trouble wearing a mask due to health conditions or disability are exempt. This can include people with mental health conditions, chronic respiratory problems, facial eczema, history of oral surgery etc. They do not need to confirm this exemption with their health provider. However, some may choose to discuss their situation with their clinician'*. Please note that in this case employers will need to consider the safety risk this mask exemption poses for an individual, other employees and the public – it may be that people are re-assigned to positions which do not involve seeing the public if necessary.

### **Can I please get an exemption from nasopharyngeal swabs due to a deviated nasal septum?**

Nasopharyngeal swabs are an essential part of our ability to detect covid-19 in the community. They are done regularly and are very low risk. We will not be providing exemptions unless there is evidence of a significant nasal issues. This would be based upon the assessment of an ear, nose and throat specialist and it is likely you would need imaging (e.g. a CT scan) to confirm this diagnosis.

### **Is it safe to get the covid-19 vaccine while pregnant?**

In short, yes. We strongly recommend that all pregnant women get the covid-19 vaccine as they are at higher risk of complications from covid-19 including hospital admission, admission to ICU, needing ventilation, and overall morbidity and mortality. This is in keeping with the recommendation from the Royal Australia New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG). Please have a look at their patient advice regarding vaccination while pregnant - <https://ranzcof.edu.au/statements-guidelines/covid-19-statement/information-for-pregnant-women>

We also suggest that you read through other commonly asked FAQs on the Doctors Stand Up for Vaccination website. (<https://www.doctors-stand-up-for-vaccination.com/about-us/>) This letter has good quality information and has been signed by thousands of New Zealand doctors.

If you wish to discuss these questions further, please do feel free to contact reception and arrange a consultation with a doctor. However please do be aware that these questions and answers have been reviewed by our entire clinical team, and we are all in agreement regarding these answers.

Best wishes, The Team at Holistic Medical Centre