

# Post Vaccine Symptom Check report: 2023 influenza vaccine survey

Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora and Medsafe advises people NOT to make any decisions about vaccination based only on the information contained in this report. If you have questions or concerns about receiving a vaccine, please speak to a health care professional.

## Introduction

The information from the Post Vaccine Symptom Check (PVSC) survey supports ongoing safety monitoring of the influenza vaccine used in Aotearoa New Zealand.

On 1 March 2023, the annual influenza vaccine winter rollout began. The influenza vaccine targeted four strains of influenza. Eligible individuals could choose to have both influenza and bivalent (COVID-19) vaccines together (concomitant administration).

The influenza vaccine PVSC campaign was conducted from 1 April 2023 through 30 September 2023. This campaign used a QR code registration format, where consumers were able to register at the vaccination sites to participate in a survey asking if they had experienced an adverse reaction after their vaccination. Using the QR code format for registration requires active involvement from participants from the start of the process. This contributed to lower overall uptake in the QR code PVSC campaign compared to the SMS-based PVSC campaigns. If individuals received a concomitant dose of influenza and bivalent COVID-19 vaccines, they were recommended not to register via QR code, as they were eligible to be contacted via SMS.

If participants scanned the QR code at their vaccination site, they were directed to a registration page to fill out on their device. Registered participants were then sent a link 7 days after their vaccination via text message to complete a survey. Participants were then sent another survey 42 days after their vaccination, asking about less common adverse reactions experienced.

The information presented below is limited to those that were vaccinated with the 2023 influenza vaccine, registered via QR code for the PVSC, and participated in the influenza PVSC survey. It does not represent the total number of people who were vaccinated nor the total number of people who experienced an adverse reaction after their vaccination. Not everyone will report a reaction to the vaccine through the PVSC campaign, some might submit a report to the Centre for Adverse Reactions Monitoring ([CARM](#)).

The number of vaccine adverse reaction reports in a PVSC campaign can be influenced by; the number of participants, the nature of the symptoms (e.g., how painful the vaccination was), and other factors (e.g., concurrent viral infection or other medicines taken), which vary over time.

PVSC survey answers may come from one person, but that person may report more than one adverse reaction. As with any adverse reaction, some may be associated with the vaccine or may be coincidental and due to other reasons.

PVSC surveys do not specifically ask for the reason why a person sought medical care in the days following vaccination. Therefore, medical attendance reported may or may not be related to any reported adverse reactions.

**Based on data collected from the influenza PVSC campaign we have not identified any new safety concerns for the 2023 influenza vaccine. Collected data is in line with data collected from clinical trials and from other post-marketing surveillance in New Zealand and overseas.**

## Survey results

From 1 April 2023 through 30 September 2023, text messages were sent to QR-registered consumers 7 and 42 days following their 2023 influenza vaccination, asking if they had experienced any adverse reactions. Response rates for the day 7 and 42 surveys were 53% and 59% respectively ([Table 1](#)).

According to the day 7 survey, 46% percent of respondents reported at least one adverse reaction ([Table 2](#)). Participants were not asked about adverse reactions experienced post vaccination in the 42-day survey.

The five most frequently reported adverse reactions for the day 7 survey were: injection site reaction, fatigue or tiredness, head or muscle aches, flu symptoms, and chills ([Table 3](#)). These are common adverse reactions linked to the immune response following immunisation with many vaccines.

For the day 7 survey, about 9% of participants reported missing work or other daily activities, the majority were reported to have missed one day or less. In the day 42 survey, 4% of participants reported missing work or other daily activities.

Medical advice was sought by 2% of participants within 7 days of vaccination, this could include seeking care from a GP clinic, phone advice from a helpline (e.g., Healthline), visiting a hospital emergency department, rangoā clinic, Whānau Ora navigator, or a Marae. In the day 42 survey, 4% of participants indicated visiting the doctor ([Figure 1](#)).

Table 1: Summary of text message responses, 1 April 2023 through 30 September 2023

Survey	Number of people sent text messages	Number of responses received	Percentage of responses received
Day 7	272	145	53%
Day 42	145	86	59%

Table 2: Responses to day 7 survey health impact questions among 145 responses received, 1 April 2023 through 30 September 2023

	Number	Percentage (%)
Reported at least one adverse reaction	67	46%
Sought medical advice	3	2%
Missed activity	13	9%

Table 3: Most frequently reported adverse reactions (day 7 survey) following influenza vaccine among 145 responses received, 1 April 2023 through 30 September 2023

Adverse reactions	Number	Percentage (%)
Injection site reaction	54	37%
Fatigue or tiredness	41	28%
Headache, muscle or body aches or pain	37	26%
Flu symptoms	19	13%
Chills	11	8%

Figure 1: People that sought medical advice after vaccination with the influenza vaccine, 1 April through to 30 September 2023

<p><b>Day 7 survey</b> Around 2 in 100 people (2%) reported seeking medical advice within 7 days after their influenza vaccination</p>	<p><b>Day 42 Survey</b> Around 4 in 100 people (4%) reported seeking medical advice within 42 days after their influenza vaccination</p>
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