



28 November 2022

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S Hill

By email: fyi-request-20907-de7a859e@requests.fyi.org.nz
Ref: H2022016885

Tēnā koe Mr Hill

Response to your request for official information

Thank you for your request under the Official Information Act 1982 (the Act) received by Manatū Hauora (the Ministry of Health) as a partial transfer from Te Whatu Ora (Health New Zealand) on 14 November 2022 for information regarding the transmission of COVID-19. Please find a response to your request below.

“1. Why did the The Ministry of Health and Te Whatu Ora state repeatedly that being vaccinated reduced transmission of the COVID-19 virus?”

2. What evidence was The Ministry of Health and Te Whatu Ora acting on when they stated to Government and the New Zealand public that being vaccinated reduced transmission of the COVID-19 virus?”

Information collated by Manatū Hauora about transmission is available on our website on the COVID-19 Science news webpage here: www.health.govt.nz/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-resources-and-tools/covid-19-science-news#variants.

In general (not COVID-19-specific), there are two mechanisms through which vaccines can potentially reduce transmission:

1. Preventing infection of the vaccinated person (if a person is uninfected, they cannot transmit the virus). This is measured in vaccine efficacy/effectiveness against infection.
2. Reducing the number of onward infections (if the vaccinated person does become infected). This is measured by assessing the reduction in the number of transmissions to contacts of infected individuals.

These two methods combine to provide a larger effect than either of them in isolation. For the Pfizer vaccine, there is a substantial body available about its ability to reduce the number of infections (and the subsequent effect on transmission through reduction of infection). This data has been monitored by Manatū Hauora and is publicly available on our website on the COVID-19 Science news webpage.

Although the effectiveness of the vaccine against infection reduces over time, an effect does persist for a period after vaccination (for example it is estimated 50% of infections are prevented at around four months after vaccination for individuals aged 18-59 years). Effects on onward transmissions (that is, the ability of a vaccinated person to transmit on to other people) is substantially more challenging to measure (and the results are harder to interpret) as there are far fewer studies. The limited data that is available for Omicron on onward transmission after infection (all vaccines, not limited to Pfizer) is available on the COVID-19 Science news webpage.

It should be noted that data for vaccine effectiveness (against infection and onward transmission) for variants prior to Omicron have been monitored since trial data was first released by Pfizer in 2020. Vaccine effectiveness against infection was generally higher for previous variants than for Omicron.

I trust this information fulfils your request. Under section 28(3) of the Act, you have the right to ask the Ombudsman to review any decisions made under this request. The Ombudsman may be contacted by email at: info@ombudsman.parliament.nz or by calling 0800 802 602.

Please note that this response, with your personal details removed, may be published on the Manatū Hauora website at: www.health.govt.nz/about-ministry/information-releases/responses-official-information-act-requests.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dave Henderson', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Dave Henderson
Interim Group Manager, Intelligence, Surveillance and Knowledge
Public Health Agency | Te Pou Hauora Tūmatanui