



Vaccination passes: tips for dealing with customers





Introduction

The Government's traffic light, COVID-19 Protection Framework, provides a pathway out of lockdown and ability for businesses and events to re-open to vaccinated New Zealanders.

Once 90% of eligible New Zealanders are fully vaccinated and protected, this new framework will be introduced.

The Framework aims to bring some stability to businesses as it relies less on the need for level changes that restrict trading as the main measure to stop the virus spreading.

The traffic light framework will allow businesses such as hospitality, previously considered high-risk, to fully open to vaccinated customers at green and orange and continue to operate with some restrictions at red. This means a key part of opening without restrictions to vaccinated customers is verifying your customer's My Vaccine Pass.

In this guide we provide some tips for employees to help them adapt to the new requirements, including how to deal with difficult customers and de-escalation techniques.

When does a business have to require a vaccination pass to be presented?

- Businesses, including hospitality, and events, may legally choose to implement a vaccination entry requirement for customers. For hospitality businesses this would allow them to operate 'without limits' at Green and Orange, and to remain open but with restrictions at Red.
- If a business, organisation or service does not wish to request proof of vaccine, they will have to operate with strict limits on capacity and space requirements. For hospitality businesses this would mean they could only operate contactless at Red and Orange and with restrictions at Green.

Managing the new rules with customers

Most customers will adapt to the new requirements and will just need initial guidance to get familiar with the new rules. However some people feel strongly about Covid-19 vaccinations and may not agree with the requirement to show their vaccination pass. Here are some tips for dealing with customers.

DO

- Be patient, these are new rules for everyone and you can't assume everyone knows the process.
- Be clear and assist where appropriate, for instance let the customer know how to open their digital vaccination pass.
- If the customer has concerns that you are accessing private information you can reassure them that the businesses doesn't get access to, or record, any medical or personal information about the them when verifying their vaccination pass. No information is stored.
- If you get some push back, remind the customer that the rules have been put in place so you can safely operate, and you must follow them.
- Know when to get support, call a manager or owner for help if you are feeling uncomfortable or the situation is escalating (see de-escalation tips on the following page).
- If the situation has escalated the manager may let the customer know they will need to leave the premises if they cannot comply with the requirements.
 - "We do have the right to refuse your entry if you cannot or will not show us your vaccination pass. If you are unable to do this, unfortunately we are going to have to ask you to leave our business."

- Follow your company guidelines when a customer doesn't want to comply with the rules. This may include:
 - Calling the Police if the situation requires it with a very aggressive customer.
 - "We do have the right to refuse your entry if you cannot or will not show us your vaccination pass. Please respect our staff. We will need to call security or the Police if you do not leave our business."
 - Retreating to a safe location if you feel threatened.

DON'T

If customers are aggressive or intimidating, your safety and the safety of other workers is the top priority. Don't put yourself in harm's way.

See the de-escalation tips on the following page.

- Try to diffuse argument – try to contain and limit any hostility.
- Don't raise your voice – even if the customer is yelling at you, don't yell back. It will likely inflame the situation further. It would be better to get support from management if dealing with an aggressive customer.

Customer comms

Customers may feel nervous about the new rules, particularly if they don't know what to expect when they arrive. Think of what you can do in advance to let the customer know.

- Update your website and social pages reminding the dining public that it is a requirement for them to present their vaccination pass when they arrive. You'll need to sight their pass and will be verifying a reasonable number.
- If you take bookings, let your guests know when they book that they will need to have a vaccination pass to enter the premises.
- Let them know to bring a second form of photo ID too. It is optional to request to view ID to match the name on the pass.
- On arrival, can you utilise signage to assist clarifying the process?

Engage and encourage customers.

Remember, customers will be adjusting to this new normal too; offer a welcoming smile and greeting.

The majority will take these new requirements in their stride but the easier we can make it for them, the easier it should be for our teams on the front line.



De-escalation techniques - keeping calm and safe

When people feel uncertain, confused or unheard they can become distressed, anxious or angry and can present challenging behaviours. Planning ahead for how to respond when this occurs, can help us to stay calm and able to cope with challenges when they arise.

CHECK YOUR SAFETY SPACE

- Respect personal space: 2-3 metres away. If someone becomes agitated, aim for 3-4 metres
- Know where your exits are and/or retreat options
- Know what the escalation plan is for your team

USE YOUR EYES AND EARS

- Sometimes even before a person speaks, their facial expression or the way they are walking or standing will give you a hint as to how a person is feeling
- When a person is agitated, they will often speak more quickly or with a louder voice. This can be a clue that a person is upset
- If you see someone becoming agitated, check whether it might reflect a communication challenge or indicate a support need (e.g. vision, hearing, neuro-diversity)

BE CALM AND WELCOMING

- Introduce yourself, smile and make eye contact to establish rapport, take your time
- Be respectful: give the person your full attention and listen carefully to what they say
- Use please and thank you when making requests (rather than issuing commands or demands)

- Aim to understand their concerns: ask open questions and check with them to ensure you have understood
- Listen for the underlying needs in their message: tone of voice, emphasis and body language can be clues as to what is important to them
- Speak slowly and allow time for the person to think about options and responses
- Be empathic and non-judgemental in your words and your actions

SET BOUNDARIES

- If a person raises their voice, makes threats, or is uncivil in words or behaviours:
 - Be calm
 - State the unwanted behaviour
 - State the behaviour you want to see, in order to be able to help them
 - If the behaviour persists, end the communication
 - IF YOU FEEL UNSAFE REMOVE YOURSELF AND SEEK HELP

TALK TO SOMEONE AFTERWARDS

- Find time to talk with someone afterwards
- You can expect to feel the effects of adrenalin in the period after the event.

How to verify a customer's vaccination pass



For a business operating with the requirement for customers to show their My Vaccine Pass, each pass will need to be sighted and you'll need to verify a reasonable number. We've outlined the expected process for verifying a customer's digital vaccination pass.

DOMESTIC DIGITAL VACCINATION PASS

- Since late November 2021, everyone in New Zealand over 12 years and 3 months has been able to access a digital vaccination pass. This will show their name and date of birth and include a QR code, which can be printed or saved to a phone.
- In order to operate with less restrictions, many businesses will require a pass to be shown as proof of vaccination in a range of public settings, including:
 - hospitality
 - events.
- There will be options available for people who do not have a smartphone or access to a computer.

Exemptions

- Children under the age of 12 years and 3 months will not be required to show proof of vaccination.
- There will be an exemption process to get certification for the small number of people who are unable to get a vaccination for medical reasons. Exempt people will still need to show their pass and for the person sighting/verifying the pass, there will be no difference in appearance between a pass for a vaccinated person and someone with an exemption.

WHEN A CUSTOMER ARRIVES AT THE BUSINESS

- The customer's vaccination pass will need to be sighted/verified by someone in the business as the customer arrives at the business, or soon thereafter.
- It will not be like the Covid Tracer QR code where the customer scans themselves, the Pass will need to be presented and sighted/verified individually.
- Depending on the style of the business, this may require a person dedicated to this role, located near the entrance.
- The verifier can download and use the free NZ Pass Verifier app to scan the customer's QR code on their pass, or utilise an integrated system to verify.
- Once the QR code on the customer's Pass is scanned
 - there will be either a green tick to show the customer is deemed vaccinated,
 - this means the customer is able to come onto the premises where mandatory vaccination is required.
- To ensure the identification of the person presenting the vaccination pass, businesses may also optionally request that the customer show another form of identification (photo ID).

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

- A green tick to show the customer is deemed fully vaccinated. They are allowed to enter the business.



- A red cross to show the customer's My Vaccine Pass is not valid and therefore will not be able to come onto the premises.



Note

- People without a Smartphone will be able to request a printed copy of their pass to carry with them. This will also be able to be used for the verification process.



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CROWD CONTROL AND OTHER BUSINESS CONSIDERATIONS

Businesses will need to consider how best to manage a large number of people entering the premises at one time. Sighting (and verifying) everyone's digital vaccination pass may create bottlenecks at busy times.

- What systems will you put in place to ensure everyone is checked as they enter?
- How will the business manage functions or large tables?
- How will the business manage people going in and out of the restaurant - for instance, to smoke? Will they be given a pass/stamp?