

# COVID-19 VACCINATION

Safe. Effective. Free.

Prioritising Residential Aged Care

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

3 February 2021

The Department of Health will update this information regularly as new information becomes available.

### Who is eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine in the first phase (Phase 1a)?

Residential aged care workers and residents will be among the first people who can choose to receive the vaccine in the first roll-out phase (Phase 1a).

More information is outlined in the [Australian COVID-19 Vaccination Policy](#) and the [COVID-19 Vaccines National Roll-Out Strategy](#).

### Is the vaccine voluntary?

COVID-19 vaccines will be voluntary and free for everyone living in Australia.

While the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) strongly encourages COVID-19 vaccination, at this time AHPPC has not recommended mandating COVID-19 vaccination for the aged care workforce. The AHPPC will continue to monitor the situation and update its advice accordingly.



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### How do we know the vaccine is safe?

The Therapeutic Goods Administration's (TGA) rigorous assessment process of potential COVID-19 vaccines will ensure approved vaccines are safe and effective.

All vaccines are thoroughly tested for safety before they are approved for use in Australia. This includes careful analysis of clinical trial data, ingredients, chemistry, manufacturing and other factors.

The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine has been provisionally approved by the TGA for people 16 years and older. The approval is subject to strict conditions, and Pfizer will be required to continue providing information to the TGA on the safety, efficacy and quality of the vaccine.

More information on this approval is available on the [Department of Health's website](#).

Provisional approval of the University of Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine is currently anticipated in February, subject to approval by the TGA.

You can talk to your GP or a health professional about the COVID-19 vaccines and why vaccination is an important part of keeping the community safe and healthy.

### Is the vaccine safe for frail elderly people over 85 years of age?

Specific advice for frail elderly people on receiving a COVID-19 vaccine will be provided by the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI).

The TGA have advised the potential benefits of vaccination versus the potential risk and clinical impact of even relatively mild systemic adverse events in the frail elderly should be carefully assessed on a case-by-case basis. Patients and/or their families, representatives and carers can talk to their GP or a health professional about the COVID-19 vaccines.

### What vaccine will be used in the first phase (Phase 1a)?

The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine has been provisionally approved by the TGA for people 16 years and older. The approval is subject to strict conditions, and Pfizer will be required to continue providing information to the TGA on the safety, efficacy and quality of the vaccine.

Provisional approval of another vaccine, the University of Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, is currently anticipated in February, subject to approval by the TGA.

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### Who is managing the roll-out of vaccines to residential aged care facilities?

The Australian Government is responsible for leading the implementation of the COVID-19 Vaccination Program to the large majority of RACFs in consultation with peak bodies and state and territory governments. However, NSW, SA and VIC state governments will be responsible for leading the vaccine roll out to state run RACFs in their state.

Administration of the vaccine to residential aged care residents and workers will be done through an in-reach Commonwealth vaccination workforce. This means an additional skilled vaccine workforce, separate to the residential aged care facility workers, will be recruited and trained to work in partnership with and visit residential aged care facilities and administer the vaccine to facility workers and residents.

NSW, SA and VIC state governments will provide further information on the administration of COVID-19 vaccines to residents and workers in their state run RACFs.

More information on this workforce is available on the [Department of Health's website](#).

### Where will residents and workers of residential aged care facilities receive their vaccination?

Workers and residents in residential aged care facilities will receive their vaccination in their residential aged care facility. Information will be provided to you ahead of vaccinators attending your facility.

### When will residents and workers of residential aged care facilities receive their vaccination?

The first phase of the vaccine roll-out, which includes residential aged care facility residents and workers, is planned to commence from late-February. Information will be provided to you ahead of vaccinators attending your facility.

### Why should I get the vaccine?

Getting a COVID-19 vaccination helps protect you, your community and your loved ones.

Both the Pfizer/BioNTech and the University of Oxford/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines show they are very good at protecting against severe illness and death.

You can talk to your GP or a health professional about the COVID-19 vaccines and why vaccination is an important part of keeping the community safe and healthy.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration's (TGA) rigorous assessment process of potential COVID-19 vaccines will ensure approved vaccines are safe and effective.

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### **What will happen if I choose not to get the vaccine?**

Vaccination is voluntary.

If you are a resident in residential aged care, your decision to have or not to have the COVID-19 vaccination will not affect your care or your rights.

### **What if I am not available on the day the vaccination is administered at my RACF and I miss getting it?**

More information will be provided on this soon.

### **Once I have had a vaccination, do I still need to take other precautions to stop the spread of COVID-19?**

Yes, a COVID-19 vaccine is just one part of keeping the community safe and healthy.

It is important for everyone to continue COVIDSafe practises such as hand hygiene, physical distancing and wearing masks when required, particularly in residential aged care facilities.

### **Can I have both the COVID-19 vaccine and the annual influenza vaccine?**

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) agrees that all available steps should be taken to maximise influenza vaccine coverage amongst the aged care workforce, residents and their carers.

Routine scheduling and giving an influenza vaccine with a COVID-19 vaccine on the same day is not currently recommended.

This recommendation from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) is based on the current lack of direct data demonstrating absence of any safety issues or interference of immune responses after co-administration of an influenza and COVID-19 vaccines.

Advice from ATAGI is that the preferred minimum interval between administration of either the Pfizer/BioNTech or the University of Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines and any influenza vaccine is 14 days. This is the current precautionary advice.

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### Where can I find out more information?

The Department of Health will continue to provide updates.

You can find information, including translated information, on the Department of Health's [COVID-19 vaccines website](#). You can also subscribe to receive the [COVID-19 Vaccines Update](#).

You can also get regular updates via the Department of Health's social media channels on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and YouTube.

You can also call the National Coronavirus Helpline on 1800 020 080, and ask for an interpreter if needed.