

COVID-19 VACCINATION

Safe. Effective. Free.

Prioritising Residential Aged Care

INFORMATION FOR WORKERS, HEALTH PROFESSIONALS AND OTHER WORKERS IN RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE FACILITIES

3 February 2021

Update on Australia's COVID-19 vaccines

The Australian Government has a strategy to deliver COVID-19 vaccines to everyone living in Australia. The [vaccine roll-out roadmap](#) outlines the staged roll-out of the vaccine to priority groups, which is expected to commence from late-February 2021.

A COVID-19 vaccine is just one part of keeping our 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 (RACFs).

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](#).



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Vaccine safety and effectiveness

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.

COVID-19 vaccination is voluntary, but strongly encouraged

COVID-19 vaccines will be safe, free and voluntary 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.

How the vaccine will be distributed to RACFs and administered in the first phase

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

RACFs have a key role to play in the COVID-19 Vaccination Program.

Administration of the COVID-19 vaccine to RACF workers and residents will be done through an in-reach Commonwealth vaccination workforce. This means an additional skilled vaccine workforce, separate to the RACF workers, will work in partnership with facilities and be appropriately trained to administer the vaccine to workers and residents in their facility.

Information will be provided to you ahead of vaccinators attending your facility. More information on this workforce is available on the [Department of Health's website](#). 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.

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Arranging vaccinations and obtaining and recording consent

Appropriate consent will be obtained prior to vaccination.

More information about obtaining and recording consent and registering workers and residents to receive a vaccination will be provided soon.

Likely side effects from COVID-19 vaccines

As part of regulatory assessment, the TGA considers information about possible side effects. For a vaccine to be registered for use in Australia, the benefits must outweigh the risks. As with all vaccines, some side effects can be expected. Usually any side effects are mild and temporary.

Clinical trials of COVID-19 vaccines have reported temporary side effects typical of vaccines, such as pain at the injection site, fever or muscle aches and headaches.

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. The data on how effective the vaccines will be at preventing transmission of COVID-19, and how long immunity will last, will continue to emerge over the coming months.

COVID-19 vaccination for frail elderly people over 85 years of age

Specific advice for frail elderly people on receiving the 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 can talk to their GP or a health professional about the COVID-19 vaccines.

COVID-19 vaccines and annual influenza vaccination

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

This recommendation, from 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.

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.

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Continuing COVIDSafe practises

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 RACFs.

Keep up to date with trusted 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 call the National Coronavirus Helpline on 1800 020 080, and ask for an interpreter if needed.