

COVID-19 Vaccine Program

Q&As

Current as at 19 February, 2021

SAFETY & CERTAINTY

1. Which COVID-19 vaccines will be used in Australia?

Two vaccines, the Pfizer vaccine and the AstraZeneca vaccine, have been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) for use in the Australian Government's COVID-19 vaccination program.

From Monday 22 February 2021, the Pfizer vaccine will be used for priority groups who are at the greatest risk of exposure to COVID-19. Vaccinations using AstraZeneca are expected to begin in March 2021.

Both vaccines need to be taken in two doses. The doses need to be spaced out – for Pfizer by at least 21 days, and for AstraZeneca by at least 28 days or more.

Vaccination is free and available to everyone who can be vaccinated in Australia.

So far, the TGA has approved the Pfizer vaccine for people aged 16 years and older, and the AstraZeneca vaccine for people aged 18 years and over. Until further information on the safety and efficacy of these vaccines in younger people is available, they will not be given to people aged younger than 18 years (AstraZeneca) or 16 years (Pfizer).

More information about Australia's rollout is available on the Australian Government's COVID website at <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines>.

2. Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe?

Vaccines are tested to ensure they are safe before they are approved for use.

Before vaccines are made available in Australia, they must pass strict Australian safety standards set by the Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA).

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

Find out more about the safety of COVID-19 vaccines at <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/learn-about-covid-19-vaccines/are-covid-19-vaccines-safe>.

<p>3. How effective are the COVID-19 vaccines?</p>	<p>These vaccines have been shown to prevent disease, serious illness and death.</p> <p>Find out more about the efficacy of the vaccine at https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/learn-about-covid-19-vaccines/are-covid-19-vaccines-safe.</p>
<p>4. Can I get COVID-19 from the COVID-19 vaccine?</p>	<p>No, the COVID-19 vaccines do not contain the COVID-19 virus. It is impossible to get COVID-19 from these vaccines.</p>
<p>5. Is the vaccine safe for children?</p>	<p>The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has approved the Pfizer vaccine for people aged 16 years and older, and the AstraZeneca vaccine for people aged 18 and over. They were not studied in younger people including children.</p> <p>Until further evidence on their safety and efficacy in younger people is available, they should not be given to people aged younger than 18 years (AstraZeneca) or 16 years (Pfizer).</p>
<p>6. Can I receive the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine if I am breastfeeding, pregnant or trying to become pregnant?</p>	<p>The Australian Government has recently released guidance on the use of the Pfizer vaccine for pregnant and breastfeeding women, and women who are planning to become pregnant.</p> <p>This advice is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The Pfizer vaccine is safe for breastfeeding women. They can receive the vaccine at any time and do not have to stop breastfeeding - For women planning pregnancy, they can receive the Pfizer vaccine at any time. They do not have to avoid becoming pregnant before or after vaccination. - It is not currently recommended that pregnant women receive the COVID-19 vaccine, as we don't yet have enough information to know for certain whether the Pfizer vaccine is safe in pregnancy. - Women who are at particular risk of COVID-19 infection, or with risk factors for severe COVID-19 illness, can consider having COVID-19 vaccination during pregnancy. <p>Further information will become available in coming months. However, as with any health concern during pregnancy, women with queries about vaccination while pregnant should talk to their doctor or midwife.</p> <p>It is expected that further guidance on the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine in pregnancy and breastfeeding will soon be available from the Australian Government.</p> <p>More information about pregnancy and the vaccine can be found at https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/02/covid-19-vaccination-covid-19-vaccination-decision-guide-for-women-who-are-pregnant-breastfeeding-or-planning-pregnancy.pdf.</p>
<p>7. What are the vaccine side effects? How are vaccine side effects different from COVID-19 symptoms?</p>	<p>Like many other vaccinations, COVID-19 vaccines can have side effects. These include pain at the injection site, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, joint pain, chills or fever. These symptoms are generally mild and on average resolve within a day or two.</p>

	<p>Some of the symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to the side effects of vaccination (for example, fever and chills), but others are quite different.</p> <p>Symptoms of COVID-19 infection can include coughing, sore throat, shortness of breath, runny nose and loss of or change in sense of smell or taste. These are not normal vaccine reactions. If you have these symptoms, before or after receiving the vaccine, get tested and isolate until you get your result.</p> <p>More information about side effects of the vaccine can be at https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines.</p>
<p>8. What if I have a history of anaphylaxis?</p>	<p>If you have a history of anaphylaxis or allergic reactions to vaccines you should discuss this with your doctor and also with immunisation provider, before receiving your first dose.</p> <p>After receiving a vaccination, everyone should wait for 15 minutes before leaving the premises so they can be monitored for any reaction. People with a history of allergic reactions to vaccination, or of anaphylaxis to any exposure, should wait 30 minutes after vaccination to be observed for a reaction.</p> <p>Anyone who is suspected to have had an allergic reaction to the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine should see their doctor and discuss with the specialist vaccination centre or an allergy specialist.</p> <p>More information about the vaccine can be at https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines.</p>
<p>9. Will the COVID-19 vaccine also protect me against the flu?</p>	<p>No, different vaccinations are required for COVID-19 and influenza (the flu).</p> <p>The virus that causes coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, is different to the virus that causes the flu and causes a more severe illness. An annual winter flu vaccination through your doctor or immunisation provider can help to protect you from the flu and is still strongly recommended for all those eligible.</p> <p>Vaccination against influenza should be available from April 2021.</p>
<p>10. Can I have the flu jab at the same time as my COVID-19 vaccination?</p>	<p>No, at this time the advice is that COVID-19 vaccines, and all other vaccines – including influenza – need to be given at least 14 days apart.</p>
<p>11. Who do I contact if I have concerns regarding the COVID-19 vaccine?</p>	<p>The best person to talk to for advice about the COVID-19 vaccine is your doctor or healthcare provider.</p>
<p>12. I am afraid of needles, is there another way I can receive the COVID-19 vaccine?</p>	<p>No, the only way to administer the COVID-19 vaccine is through a needle. Please talk to your GP and let your immunisation provider know that you are afraid of needles when you attend your appointment.</p>

<p>13. If I have a reaction to the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine can I still have the second dose?</p>	<p>If you have a non-allergic reaction, for example you faint, you can receive the second dose. Let your immunisation provider know if you are prone to fainting.</p> <p>If you have a mild to moderate reaction you can still receive the second dose, but must remain on-site and under supervision at the vaccine site for 30 minutes after your second dose.</p> <p>Special vaccination centres will be available for people with a history of severe allergic reactions to vaccines so they can be safely vaccinated against COVID-19. Anyone who is suspected to have had an allergic reaction to the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine should see their doctor and discuss with the specialist vaccination centre or an allergy specialist.</p> <p>If you experience anaphylaxis, you should consult your doctor and consider referral to an allergy specialist before receiving the second dose. If in doubt, always speak with your doctor first.</p> <p>More information about the vaccine can be found at https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines.</p>
<p>14. Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe for people with allergies?</p>	<p>Yes. Both the Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines are safe for people with allergies such as asthma, hayfever, and food allergies.</p> <p>If you have ever had an allergic reaction to a vaccine before, you should discuss with your doctor or vaccine provider before having your first dose of COVID-19 vaccine.</p> <p>More information about the vaccine can be at https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines.</p>
<p>15. Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe for people with immunodeficiencies?</p>	<p>Yes. Both the Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines are safe for people with immunodeficiencies and autoimmune conditions.</p> <p>However, the COVID-19 vaccines may be less effective for people with immune deficiencies, or people who are on medicines that affect the immune system.</p> <p>If you have immunodeficiency or are on medicines that affect the immune system please talk to your medical specialist or GP.</p> <p>More information about COVID-19 vaccines can be found at https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines.</p>
<p>16. I have already had COVID-19, do I still need the vaccine?</p>	<p>Yes. You still need the COVID-19 vaccine if you've had COVID-19.</p> <p>In the clinical trials of the Pfizer vaccine, no specific safety issues were reported among people who had previously been infected with COVID-19.</p>

<p>17. Do I still need to practice other COVIDsafe behaviours once I've been vaccinated?</p>	<p>Yes, COVIDSafe practices remain vital for everyone whether you've been vaccinated or not. No vaccine is 100% effective. We must all remain COVIDSafe.</p> <p>This means</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - wash hands thoroughly and often - cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, or cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve or elbow - keep a distance of at least 1.5 metres between yourself and others - wear a mask when required to do so - follow current public health restrictions - if you feel unwell, get tested for COVID-19 as soon as possible and stay home until you receive a negative result.
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<p>18. Will the COVID-19 vaccine be effective against new variants / mutations?</p>	<p>New information about COVID-19 vaccines is becoming available all the time. For the most up to date information visit the Australian Government's Department of Health COVID-19 vaccine website www.health.gov.au/covid-19-vaccines.</p>
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LOGISTICS & PRIVACY

<p>19. Do we get a choice of vaccine type?</p>	<p>No, under the Federal Government's rollout program you will be provided with the vaccine that is available at the time of your vaccination.</p> <p>Some early priority groups will receive the Pfizer vaccine because that is the first vaccine to be approved and available in Australia. Most Australians will receive the AstraZeneca vaccine.</p> <p>Both vaccines need to be dispensed in two doses, separated by at least 21 days for the Pfizer vaccine, and four to 12 weeks for the AstraZeneca vaccine.</p> <p>COVID-19 vaccines are not interchangeable. The course of vaccination should be completed using the same vaccine for both doses.</p> <p>For more information on Australia's vaccine rollout visit https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines.</p>
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<p>20. When will COVID-19 vaccines be made available in Victoria?</p>	<p>A staged rollout of the vaccine in Australia will commence from 22 February, 2021.</p> <p>The rollout will start with the Pfizer vaccine for workers who have the greatest risk of exposure to COVID-19.</p> <p>This includes frontline health care workers such as hospital staff working in COVID-19 and suspected COVID-19 wards, Emergency Departments and Intensive Care Unit staff, staff in aged care wards, staff in General Practitioner (GP) clinics and COVID-19 testing facilities, ambulance staff and paramedics, and aged care and disability staff and residents.</p> <p>The Victorian Government will deliver doses of the Pfizer vaccine to hotel quarantine and health hotel workers, airport and port workers, high-risk frontline health care staff and public sector residential aged care staff and residents.</p>
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	<p>The Australian Government is responsible for providing the vaccine to residents and workers in private sector aged care and disability care.</p> <p>The Australian Government is also responsible for purchasing the vaccines, ensuring their safety, distribution and deciding on the priority groups.</p>
21. Is the COVID-19 vaccine free?	The Australian Government has made COVID-19 vaccines free for all Australian citizens, permanent residents and temporary visa holders.
22. How many vaccine hubs will be located in Victoria and where?	<p>Initially, there will be nine hospital vaccination hubs for distributing the Pfizer vaccine.</p> <p>These will be located in or operated by the public hospitals that host Victoria's nine new Local Public Health Units:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Albury-Wodonga Health - Austin Health - Ballarat Health - Barwon Health - Bendigo Health - Goulburn Valley Health - Latrobe Health - Monash Health - Western Health <p>Once the AstraZeneca vaccine becomes available, more locations will be added, including general practices, pharmacies, Aboriginal Controlled Community Health Services (ACCHOs), community health centres, local government vaccination services, and others.</p>
23. Who is involved in the healthcare worker priority groups?	<p>The first group of priority healthcare workers (Phase 1a) has been identified by the Australian Government and includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Quarantine and border workers - hospital staff (both clinical and non-clinical) who work in Emergency Departments, Intensive Care Units, COVID and suspected COVID wards - ambulance staff and paramedics - staff in GP respiratory clinics and COVID-19 testing facilities - staff working in COVID-19 vaccination clinics - Aged care and disability care staff - Aged care and disability care residents.
24. If I am not an Australian citizen will I be eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine?	The Australian Government has made COVID-19 vaccines available free of charge for all Australian citizens, permanent residents and temporary visa holders.
25. Where can I find resources that provide COVID-19 vaccine information in other languages?	Information about COVID-19 vaccines is available from the Australian Government. Find information in your language at https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines .
26. Will there be enough COVID-19 vaccines to immunise all Australians?	The Australian Government is responsible for the vaccine rollout, and has said there will be enough COVID-19 vaccines for the entire Australian population. The rollout will increase as more vaccine becomes available.

27. Can I book in on my mobile phone?	Yes. You will be able to access the link to the COVID-19 Vaccine Management System (CVMS) on any mobile device (smart phone, tablet etc), laptop or desktop computer.
28. What if I want to receive a vaccine, but do not want to provide my personal information online?	Some personal details will be needed for you to book your vaccination through the COVID-19 Vaccine Management System (CVMS) to capture and report adverse reactions, and to conform with requirements for immunisation data to be uploaded to the Australian Immunisation Register.
29. Will I be notified in the event of a data leak/breach?	<p>The Victorian Government has built a secure, online COVID-19 Vaccine Management System (CVMS) to protect against any such incidents.</p> <p>However, in the unlikely event there is a data leak or breach, all Victorians who have used the CVMS will be notified in accordance with requirements of the Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner.</p>
30. What happens if I need to reschedule my appointment?	You can change and re-book your vaccination appointment through your account on the COVID-19 Vaccine Management System (CVMS).

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