



Settlement  
Council  
of Australia

# **NSW COVID-19 Outreach Support Guide**

Settlement Council of Australia

July 2021

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*The Settlement Council of Australia acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we operate, the Ngunnawal people. We also acknowledge the traditional custodians of the various lands on which migrants and refugees settle across Australia, and on which our sector operates.*

*We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging and celebrate the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and their ongoing cultures and connections to our lands and waters.*

## **About the Settlement Council of Australia**

*The Settlement Council of Australia is the peak body representing the vast majority of settlement agencies across Australia providing direct services and support to people migrant and refugee backgrounds.*

*The Settlement Council of Australia (SCoA) is the peak body promoting good settlement outcomes for migrants and refugees across Australia. We are committed to building an Australia where every migrant and refugee feels at home, together with our membership which is over 100 members strong and counting. We are a trusted source of policy advice, and a thought leader on enhancing the economic and social inclusion of migrants and refugees.*

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# Introduction

We would like to thank you for your immeasurable efforts to help support your communities and ensure everyone stays safe during this stressful time. This guide is meant to be used as a resource and provide you with a consolidated place to find links to information and resources that may be useful during your discussions with members of the community. This document is provided for guidance only, and you are welcome to tailor it as you wish, or disregard parts that are not relevant to your clients.

# Suggested Call Guide

**Key message to convey:** *Stay home, get tested, get vaccinated.*

## 1. COVID-19 restrictions in your area

Do you have any questions about the restrictions? Are you finding it ok to follow these restrictions?

- [Emphasise the importance of staying home and getting tested.]

If you're not sure what the restrictions are, you can tell me the suburb you live in, we can check the restrictions together.

- [Restrictions in Greater Sydney](#)  
[Explain the restrictions and emphasise the importance of staying home and getting tested.]

## 2. Getting Tested

- *If they live in the Fairfield LGA:* If you are working outside of the Fairfield Local Government Area, you need to have a COVID-19 test once every 72 hours (3 days) in order to enter your workplace.
- If you are working outside of Fairfield and haven't been tested, I can help you find a COVID-19 testing clinic near you if you'd like. [Go to <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/health-and-wellbeing/clinics>.]

## 3. Mental health, physical health or financial security assistance

- **Mental health concerns:** \*description of services attached if needed\*
- **Physical health concerns:**
  - If you need urgent medical assistance please call 000.
  - If you need to see a GP please call your regular GP who can provide a medical consultation over the phone. GP telephone consultations are available for people:
    - in a location declared to be a COVID-19 hot-spot by the Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer; or
    - required to be in quarantine or in isolation under a public health order.
- **Financial concerns:** You may be eligible for a Disaster Payment if you have missed work because of the restrictions. You can check whether you're eligible at [servicessaustralia.gov.au](https://servicessaustralia.gov.au). The eligibility information is available in 63 languages.

## 4. Vaccination

### Have you had your COVID-19 vaccination yet?

If **yes**: Congratulations! **Have you had your second dose?**

- If **yes**: Great!
- If **no**: **Are you planning to get your second dose?**
  - If **yes**: [Ensure they have a plan to get to their appointment and are feeling confident.]
  - If **no/unsure**: **Would they like more information?** [More information regarding frequent vaccine related concerns is available on page X.]

If **no**: **Are you planning on getting vaccinated?**

- If **yes**: Great! **Are you eligible for the vaccine yet?**
  - If **yes**: Have you booked an appointment?
    - If **yes**:
      - [Emphasise that getting a vaccination is an approved reason to leave home in areas subject to lockdown.]
      - [Ensure they have a plan to get to their appointment and are feeling confident.]
      - [If they are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, emphasise that they need to get tested and isolate until they get a negative result back before booking a COVID-19 vaccination.]
    - If **no [not eligible yet]**: You can stay up to date with vaccine eligibility by regularly checking the Vaccine Eligibility Checker at [health.gov.au](https://health.gov.au).
    - If **unsure**: We can check your eligibility together now – it won't take long. [Go to [Vaccine Eligibility Checker](#). See the *Select your language* section for available translations.]
  - If **no/unsure about whether they will get vaccinated**: **Would they like more information?** [More information regarding frequent vaccine related concerns is available in this guide.]

### Wrap up the conversation

- Thank the person for their time and for doing their part to protect our community and help provide answers to any other questions they may have.
- For questions that you are not sure of the answer you can reach out to SCoA by email, [health@scoa.org.au](mailto:health@scoa.org.au) and we will assist in finding an answer.

# Further information on mental health physical health or financial assistance

## Mental health concerns

- Mandatory isolation is an unfamiliar experience for most people. Many people may find it challenging. It is important to take care of your mental health.
- In NSW, the following additional services are available to those in lockdown:
  - headspace outreach support to parents and young people across greater Sydney
  - Sonder will provide anybody subject to a mandatory 14-day isolation order with 24/7 health and wellbeing support, with an emphasis on early intervention, for the entire duration of their isolation period
  - Gidget Foundation is providing counselling services for parents suffering from perinatal depression and anxiety
  - Free access to the Tresillian SleepWell baby app
  - Kids Helpline is extending its online wellbeing sessions to secondary schools
  - Butterfly Foundation is providing additional support for young people with or at risk of an eating disorder and their carers
  - Primary Health Networks across Sydney have increased access to mental health services and supports
- **For urgent mental health help:** Contact Lifeline (13 11 14) or Kids Helpline (1800 55 1800).
- **For free 24/7 Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service:** You can call Beyond Blue's Coronavirus Mental Wellbeing Support Service. You can speak to a trained counsellor on 1800 512 348 or by visiting [coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au](https://coronavirus.beyondblue.org.au).
- **Translating and Interpreting Service:** People who don't speak English as a first language can get free translation on 131 450.

## Other Mental Health supports and information available:

- Head to Health is a good place to start if you, or someone you care about, needs help managing anxiety and worry. It provides access to free and low-cost telephone and online mental health and support services. [www.headtohealth.gov.au](https://www.headtohealth.gov.au)
- Access a psychologist: Australians and eligible individuals can access psychology services that are subsidised through Medicare or reciprocal arrangements (up to 20 sessions). These services can be delivered via telehealth until 31 December 2021. To use this support you need to be eligible for Medicare and referred by a General Practitioner (GP).
- If you need help finding a GP or mental health services, visit the Healthdirect website at [www.healthdirect.gov.au](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au) and choose 'Find a health service'. Additionally, the Australian Psychology Society website can connect you to a psychologist at [www.psychology.org.au/Find-a-Psychologist](https://www.psychology.org.au/Find-a-Psychologist).

## Physical health concerns

- Telephone consultations are available for people:
  - in a location declared to be a COVID-19 hot-spot by the Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer; or
  - required to be in quarantine or in isolation under a public health order.

*\*If you are in a declared COVID-19 hot-spot you are exempt from the requirement that you must have received a face-to-face consultation from the medical practitioner or the practice in the last twelve months.*

## Financial concerns

You may be eligible for a Disaster Payment if you have missed work because of the restrictions. You can check whether you're eligible at [servicesaustralia.gov.au](https://servicesaustralia.gov.au). The eligibility information is available in 63 languages.

# Frequently Asked Questions About COVID-19

## Vaccine Safety

### 1. Why should I get vaccinated for COVID-19?

COVID-19 can cause serious illness or even death. As of 18<sup>th</sup> of June 2021, it has caused more than 3.8 million deaths worldwide, with more than 176 million cases reported.<sup>1</sup> There is no way to know how COVID-19 will affect you. If you get sick, you could spread the disease to friends, family, and others around you, putting their lives at risk. A COVID-19 vaccine greatly reduces the risk that you will develop COVID-19. In clinical trials, COVID-19 vaccines have been highly effective at preventing severe cases of COVID-19 that require hospital care or cause death. There are also some people in our community who are not able to get vaccinated, maybe because of age or because their doctor has advised them not to. By vaccinating, you are protecting yourself and others from severe COVID-19. When most of the community is vaccinated, we can protect those who cannot get vaccinated by creating “herd immunity”<sup>2</sup> which helps stop the spread of COVID-19.<sup>3</sup>

### 2. What are the benefits of getting vaccinated?

The COVID-19 vaccines produce protection against the disease by developing an immune response to the virus. This immunity helps you fight the virus if exposed. Getting vaccinated may also protect people around you, because if you are protected from getting infected and from disease, you are less likely to infect someone else. This is particularly important to protect people at increased risk for severe illness from COVID-19, such as healthcare providers, older or elderly adults, and people with other medical conditions.

### 3. Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe?

Yes! COVID-19 vaccines being used in Australia meet rigorous standards for safety and effectiveness. Millions of COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered in Australia since the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February 2021, and all COVID vaccines being used here will continue to be monitored for safety. In addition to assessing every batch of COVID-19 vaccines, the Therapeutic Goods Administration monitors vaccines for safety after they are supplied in Australia. The Australian Government is also closely monitoring immunisation programs overseas, including in the UK, Germany, and Norway. Together, this information will help to ensure that Australians have access to a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccine.<sup>4</sup>

### 4. How can COVID-19 vaccines be safe since they were developed so fast?

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<sup>1</sup> WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard. Available online at: <https://covid19.who.int/>.

<sup>2</sup> Herd Immunity Definition: If enough people in a community are immunised against an infectious disease, there is less of the disease in the community, which makes it harder for the disease to spread. Immunisation protects both people who are vaccinated and helps the entire community. It helps protect those who are too young to be vaccinated and those who can't be vaccinated for medical reasons. This is known as community (herd) immunity. (Australian Department of Health, 'Community (herd) immunity'. Available online at: <https://campaigns.health.gov.au/immunisationfacts/community-herd-immunity>)

<sup>3</sup> National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance, 'COVID-19 Frequently Asked Question.' Available online at: <https://www.ncirs.org.au/covid-19/covid-19-vaccines-frequently-asked-questions>.

<sup>4</sup> Australian Government, Department of Home Affairs, 'Misinformation and Truths about Coronavirus'. Available online at: <https://covid19inlanguage.homeaffairs.gov.au/misinformation-and-truths-about-coronavirus>

Previously a new vaccine would take 10-15 years to develop, yet the COVID-19 vaccines were produced in less than one year. This happened because of a few things. Firstly, the world has already seen a few coronavirus epidemics, first with SARS in 2002 and then more recently with MERS in 2012. This meant that researchers around the world were already studying coronaviruses and how they affect people. Some of this research included working on vaccine development<sup>5</sup>. Second, researchers were working together in a way that has never been seen before.

The clinical trials for COVID-19 vaccines have involved tens of thousands of volunteers of different ages, races, and ethnicities all over the world. Clinical trials for vaccines compare outcomes (such as how many people get sick) between people who are vaccinated and people who are not. Because COVID-19 continues to be widespread, the vaccine clinical trials were done more quickly than if the disease were less common. What researchers found out from these trials were that COVID-19 vaccines are safe and effective.<sup>6</sup>

Once the scientists have found that a vaccine is safe, effective and is needed in the population they can then apply to the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) to provide the vaccines to people in Australia. The TGA is part of the Department of Health and their role is to protect the health and wellbeing of the community by regulating and monitoring all medications and medical treatments that are distributed here in Australia.

The TGA will assess the application to make sure that that the scientists who created the vaccine developed it correctly and that their clinical studies really do prove that their vaccine is safe and effective. The TGA approval process has many steps and requires Australia's experts to determine the safety, quality, and effectiveness of the vaccine before it ever reaches us.

Once a vaccine has been approved by the TGA another group of experts called the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) help determine when vaccines should be given. While the vaccine is being delivered, the TGA collects information about the vaccines to rapidly detect, investigate and respond to any emerging safety issues.<sup>7</sup>

## **5. Will the jab hurt or make me sick?**

No. The vaccine is fast, and most people will tell you it feels like a quick sharp pinch. Afterwards, some people might get sore muscles, feel tired, or have mild fever after getting the vaccine, but most people report only a sore arm where they got the shot. These reactions mean the vaccine is working to help teach your body how to fight COVID-19 if you are exposed. For most people, these side effects will go away on their own in a few days. If you have any concerns, call your doctor or nurse.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> United States Government, National Institute of Health, 'COVID-19 Vaccine Development: Behind the Scenes'. Available online at: <https://covid19.nih.gov/news-and-stories/vaccine-development>; Journal Frontiers of Immunology, 'COVID-19: Coronavirus Vaccine Development Updates'. Available online at: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/33424848/>.

<sup>6</sup> United States Government, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 'Developing COVID-19 Vaccines.' Available online at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/distributing/steps-ensure-safety.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Australian Government, Therapeutic Goods Administration, 'COVID-19 Approval Process.' Available online at: <https://www.tga.gov.au/covid-19-vaccine-approval-process>; Australian Government Department of Health, 'Is it true? Were COVID-19 vaccines developed too quickly to be safe?' Available online at: <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/is-it-true/is-it-true-were-covid-19-vaccines-developed-too-quickly-to-be-safe>.

<sup>8</sup> National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance, 'COVID-19 Frequently Asked Question.' Available online at: <https://www.ncirs.org.au/covid-19/covid-19-vaccines-frequently-asked-questions>

## 6. What is Thrombosis with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (TTS)?

- > Thrombosis is the formation of a blood clot, which prevents blood flowing normally through the body. While thrombosis is usually a normal response to stop bleeding (e.g., following injury), in this case this process is abnormal.
- > Thrombocytopenia is a condition in which you have a low blood platelet count. Platelets (thrombocytes) are blood cells that help blood clot. Platelets stop bleeding by clumping and forming plugs in injured blood vessels.

This is a very rare side effect of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine. It can be very serious and can cause long-term disability and death. The condition causes thrombosis (blood clotting) and thrombocytopenia (low blood platelet counts). It is different from general clotting disorders such as deep vein thrombosis (DVT) or pulmonary embolism (PE). TTS can occur at various parts of the body, including the brain (called cerebral venous sinus thrombosis) and in the abdomen. The low level of blood platelets can potentially cause bleeding.<sup>9</sup>

## 7. What are the symptoms of thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS)?

Thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS) is extremely rare.

The symptoms of TTS can vary depending on the location and extent of the blood clot. Possible symptoms of TTS include:

- > severe, new, and persistent headache which is not getting better with simple painkillers
- > vomiting, and may be worse when lying down
- > blurred vision, seizures, difficulty speaking or drowsiness
- > new chest pain or difficulty breathing
- > abdominal pain associated with feeling unwell
- > tiny blood spots under the skin

The symptoms are most likely to appear between 4 and 28 days after vaccination with COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca. TTS can cause serious illness, disability or even death. Anyone who has concerning symptoms after vaccination, such as those listed above, should seek medical care urgently<sup>10</sup>.

For further information, read the Department of Health's patient information sheet on AstraZeneca vaccine and thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome [here](#).

## 8. Why are people having allergic reactions to the COVID-19 vaccine?

A few people have had allergic reactions called anaphylaxis after getting a COVID-19 vaccine but were treated and have recovered. Anaphylaxis is a serious allergy that usually happens within 15 minutes of being exposed to the thing you are allergic to. If you have any concerns that you may have an allergy, talk to your doctor. Your doctor can help you decide if it is safe for you to be vaccinated.

## 9. Can the vaccine give me COVID-19?

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<sup>9</sup>Australian Government, Department of Health, 'Patient information sheet on AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine and thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS).' Available online at: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/patient-information-sheet-on-astrazeneca-covid-19-vaccine-and-thrombosis-with-thrombocytopenia-syndrome-tts>.

<sup>10</sup> National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance, 'COVID-19 Frequently Asked Question.' Available online at: <https://www.ncirs.org.au/covid-19/covid-19-vaccines-frequently-asked-questions>.

You cannot get COVID-19 from any of the COVID-19 vaccines in use in Australia because none of them contain the live virus that causes the disease<sup>11</sup>.

#### **10. Should I get the COVID-19 vaccine if I'm pregnant?**

Research is still ongoing to understand the safety and effects of COVID-19 vaccination in pregnant women. Right now, there is no known reason that would outweigh the benefits of vaccination for pregnant women, however every person is different. For this reason, pregnant women should consult with their health care provider to decide about what is best and safest for them.<sup>12</sup>

#### **11. Is it safe for me to get a COVID-19 vaccine if I would like to have a baby one day?**

Yes. There is no evidence that any vaccine, including COVID-19 vaccines, can hurt fertility in women or men. If you are currently trying to become pregnant, you do not need to avoid pregnancy after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine.<sup>13</sup>

#### **12. Should I get the COVID-19 vaccine if I'm breastfeeding?**

While researchers are still studying COVID-19 vaccination in breastfeeding women, the WHO and the Australian Department of Health advises that vaccinations can safely be offered to women who are breastfeeding. You do not need to stop breastfeeding before or after vaccination.<sup>14</sup>

#### **13. Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe for people with certain underlying medical conditions?**

COVID-19 vaccines may be given to most people with underlying medical conditions once vaccine is available to them. However, if you have questions about getting COVID-19 vaccine, you should talk to your healthcare provider for advice. You should also inform your vaccination provider about all your allergies and health conditions.<sup>15</sup>

#### **14. Can children have a COVID-19 vaccine?**

Children under 16 years of age cannot have the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. Children and adolescents under 18 years of age cannot have the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine. This is because we don't have any clinical trial results yet to confirm that the vaccines are effective and safe in these age groups. Clinical trials in children are planned or have already started in other

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<sup>11</sup> Australian Department of Health, 'Is it true? Can COVID-19 vaccines give you COVID-19?' Available online at: <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/is-it-true/is-it-true-can-covid-19-vaccines-give-you-covid-19>.

<sup>12</sup> National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance, 'COVID-19 Frequently Asked Question.' Available online at: <https://www.ncirs.org.au/covid-19/covid-19-vaccines-frequently-asked-questions>.

<sup>13</sup> Australian Government, Department of Health 'COVID-19 vaccination – Shared decision-making guide for women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or planning pregnancy'. Available online at: <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/05/covid-19-vaccination-shared-decision-making-guide-for-women-who-are-pregnant-breastfeeding-or-planning-pregnancy-covid-19-vaccination-shared-decision-making-guide-for-women-who-are-pregnant-breastfeeding-or-planning-pregna.pdf>; UNICEF. "Navigating pregnancy during the COVID-19 pandemic". Available online at: <https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/navigating-pregnancy-during-coronavirus-disease-covid-19-pandemic>.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>15</sup> National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance, 'COVID-19 Frequently Asked Question.' Available online at: <https://www.ncirs.org.au/covid-19/covid-19-vaccines-frequently-asked-questions>.

countries, and in the future children may be able to receive vaccines <sup>16</sup>but more research needs to be done before this can be approved<sup>17</sup>.

### **15. Why has the age for AstraZeneca vaccines changed?**

As of the 17<sup>th</sup> of June 2021, ATAGI, the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (a group made up of medical experts), are recommending that the Pfizer COVID-19 Pfizer vaccine is the preferred vaccine for people aged 16 to under 60 years. This is an update from the previous recommendation for the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine be used for those aged 16 to under 50 years of age. The recommendation has been updated because these medical experts found new evidence that there is a higher risk of the rare thrombosis and thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS) related to the use of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine for Australians aged 50-59 year old.

This new evidence they have found is different from what was being reported internationally and different from what experts expected to find in Australia. ATAGI has made the change in recommendation because they consider the benefits of vaccination in preventing COVID-19 with COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca outweighs the risk of TTS in people aged 60 and above. For this age group, the benefits of receiving a COVID-19 vaccine are greater than in younger people. The risks of severe outcomes with COVID-19 increase with age and are particularly high in older unvaccinated individuals<sup>18</sup>.

### **16. Is it still safe for me to get my second AstraZeneca vaccine if I am under 60 years old?**

If you have already had your first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine and did not experience any serious or abnormal side effects, Australian health experts are recommending that it is still safe for you to receive your second AstraZeneca dose. Getting your second dose will provide you with better protection against severe illness from COVID-19. You can always talk with your GP if you are not sure or have any questions.<sup>19</sup>

## **Vaccine Effectiveness**

### **17. How do COVID-19 vaccines work?**

Vaccines train our immune system to recognize the COVID virus and make cells to fight the virus. With vaccines, we can build immunity to a disease without getting the disease.

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<sup>16</sup> UNICEF, 'COVID-19: Frequently asked questions'. Available online at: <https://www.unicef.org/stories/novel-coronavirus-outbreak-frequently-asked-questions>.

<sup>17</sup> Australian Department of Health, 'Is it true? If the vaccine is safe, why can't kids have it?' Available online at: <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/is-it-true/is-it-true-if-the-vaccine-is-safe-why-cant-kids-have-it>; National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance, 'COVID-19 Frequently Asked Question.' Available online at: <https://www.ncirs.org.au/covid-19/covid-19-vaccines-frequently-asked-questions>.

<sup>18</sup> The Australian Government, Department of Health 'TAGI statement on revised recommendations on the use of COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca, 17 June 2021'. Available online at: <https://www.health.gov.au/news/atagi-statement-on-revised-recommendations-on-the-use-of-covid-19-vaccine-astrazeneca-17-june-2021>.

<sup>19</sup> Australian Government, Department of Health, 'ATAGI advice on COVID-19 AstraZeneca vaccine'. Available online at: <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/learn-about-covid-19-vaccines/about-the-astrazeneca-covid-19-vaccine>.

## **18. How long do COVID-19 vaccines last/Will we need to get a COVID-19 booster shot each year?**

We don't know right now how long COVID-19 vaccines protect people, but continued research is being done to investigate this. It is not yet known how long the COVID-19 vaccine protection will last. Clinical trials are currently happening to find out if we will need booster doses on an annual or longer basis.

To be fully vaccinated in the initial vaccine roll out, a person must have two doses of the same type of vaccine, given at the appropriate dosing schedule.<sup>20</sup>

What we **do** know is that among people who were vaccinated in all clinical trials of the vaccines now available, the vaccines were highly effective at preventing severe cases of COVID-19.

In these trials. A small number did get sick but those who did had much more mild symptoms and were able to recover at home. Real world studies are showing the same and there is minor difference between how effective AstraZeneca is compared to Pfizer when preventing severe COVID-19, 85-90% compared to 95% respectively.<sup>21</sup>

## **19. Do I need to get a COVID-19 vaccine if I've already had COVID-19?**

Yes. When we get sick our immune system fights that illness by developing antibodies, this happens naturally if someone gets sick with COVID-19. Scientists do not yet know how long natural antibodies in people who have had COVID19 will be protect them from being re-infected. Because of this it is still recommended that people who previously had a COVID-19 infection should still be vaccinated. They are advised to speak with their GP before scheduling their vaccine.<sup>22</sup>

## **20. Will the COVID-19 vaccine prevent me from infecting others?**

COVID-19 vaccines reduce the likelihood that you will develop and be able to spread COVID-19. A growing amount of evidence shows that the risk of vaccinated people getting and spreading the virus to others is low, but ongoing studies are further analysing this question<sup>23</sup>.

## **21. Do the vaccines work on the new COVID variants?**

Scientists continue to study different forms, or variants, of the virus that causes COVID-19 to see if the vaccines will work against them. Current data shows that COVID-19 vaccines authorised and recommended for use in Australia offer protection against these known variants. For this reason, COVID-19 vaccines are an essential tool to protect people against COVID-19, including illness caused by the new variants. Scientists around the world are researching this,

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<sup>20</sup> Australian Government, Department of Health, 'COVID-19 vaccines- Is it true?' Available online at: <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/is-it-true/is-it-true-will-we-need-to-get-a-covid-19-booster-shot-each-year>.

<sup>21</sup> The Conversation, 'I'm over 50 and hesitant about the AstraZeneca COVID vaccine. Should I wait for Pfizer?' Available online at: <https://theconversation.com/im-over-50-and-hesitant-about-the-astrazeneca-covid-vaccine-should-i-wait-for-pfizer-161283>.

<sup>22</sup> National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance, 'COVID-19 Frequently Asked Question.' Available online at: <https://www.ncirs.org.au/covid-19/covid-19-vaccines-frequently-asked-questions>.

<sup>23</sup> World Health Organisation, 'Coronavirus disease (COVID-19): Vaccines'. Available online at: [https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/question-and-answers-hub/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-\(covid-19\)-vaccines](https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/question-and-answers-hub/q-a-detail/coronavirus-disease-(covid-19)-vaccines); National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance, 'COVID-19 Frequently Asked Question.' Available online at: <https://www.ncirs.org.au/covid-19/covid-19-vaccines-frequently-asked-questions>.

not just here in Australia, and will continue to monitor the impact these new variants may have on how well the vaccines work<sup>24</sup>.

## **22. Can I stop taking precautions after I get the vaccine?**

Vaccination protects you from getting seriously ill and dying from COVID-19. For the first fourteen days after getting a vaccination, you do not have significant levels of protection, then it increases gradually. For two-dose vaccines, both doses are needed to achieve the highest level of immunity possible. While a COVID-19 vaccine will protect you from serious illness and death, we still do not know the extent to which it keeps you from being infected and passing the virus on to others. For now, continue to maintain at least a 1.5-metre distance from others, clean your hands frequently, stay home if you are sick and always follow guidance from local authorities based on the situation and risk where you live.

## **Vaccine Availability**

### **23. When can I get the COVID-19 vaccine?**

The vaccines are available now for priority groups and as supply increases and more of the priority groups are vaccinated, more people from the following groups/phases be able to receive a vaccine. To find out what phase of the vaccine rollout is you can call the national hotline or go to the eligibility checker.

### **24. How much will the COVID-19 vaccine cost?**

The Australian government is providing the vaccine free of charge to all people in Australia. You do not need to be an Australian citizen or resident to be eligible. If you have a Medicare card, you can get the vaccine for free from a GP. If you do not have a Medicare card, you can receive a vaccine at any state or commonwealth funded vaccine centre or talk to your GP about where you can get your vaccine.

## **Further FAQ resources**

Further resources for Frequently Asked Questions from the National Centre for Immunisations Research and Surveillance are available [here](#), the World Health Organisation, available [here](#) and the Australian Department of Health, available [here](#). Translated versions of the Australian Department of Health FAQ's are available [here](#).

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<sup>24</sup> Australian Government Department of Health, 'Is it true? Will the COVID-19 vaccine work if coronavirus mutates?' Available online at: <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/is-it-true/is-it-true-will-the-covid-19-vaccine-work-if-coronavirus-mutates>.

# Additional Resource List

## COVID-19 safety information

- [How to protect yourself and others from coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Good hygiene for coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Physical distancing for coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Limits on public gatherings for coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Masks](#)
- [Isolation for coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Quarantine for coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)

## COVID-19 vaccination – Useful links

- [Why should I get vaccinated for COVID-19?](#)  
This webpage uses simple language to explain the key benefits of being vaccinated for COVID-19.
- [COVID-19 vaccines – Is it true?](#)  
This webpage addresses COVID-19 vaccine misconceptions and misinformation.
- [Getting a COVID-19 vaccine if you are not eligible for Medicare](#)  
If you don't have a Medicare card or are not eligible for Medicare, you can get your free vaccination at a Commonwealth Vaccination Clinic or a state or territory vaccination clinic.
- [Vaccine Eligibility Checker](#)  
This can be used to check whether you are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine and then to book a vaccine appointment.
- [Translating and Interpreting Service \(TIS National\)](#) – 13 14 50  
TIS National is for organisations that need to communicate with non-English speakers.

## COVID-19 vaccination – Easy Read resources (in English)

A series of fact sheets about COVID-19 vaccines in an Easy Read format.

- [6 steps to approve a vaccine – Easy Read](#)
- [What is the COVID-19 vaccine? – Easy Read](#)
- [Who will get the vaccine? – Easy Read](#)
- [Where can you get the vaccine? – Easy Read](#)
- [The AstraZeneca vaccine – Easy Read](#)
- [The Pfizer vaccine – Easy Read](#)
- [Getting ready for the vaccination – Easy Read](#)

- [What to expect when you have your vaccination – Easy Read](#)
- [Giving your consent – Easy Read](#)
- [Side effects you might have after your vaccination – Easy Read](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccination – Other information – Easy Read](#)

## COVID-19 vaccination – Translated information

- [COVID-19 vaccine information in your language](#)  
Essential vaccine information translated into 63 languages.
- [Why should I get the COVID-19 vaccine? \(other languages\)](#)  
This language set contains translated posters that explain why you should get the COVID-19 vaccine.
- [Who will get the COVID-19 vaccine, and where? \(other languages\)](#)  
This language set contains translations of an easy-to-read fact sheet, providing information about who will get the COVID-19 vaccine, and where.
- [What is the COVID-19 vaccine? Is it safe? \(other languages\)](#)  
This language set contains translations of an easy-to-read fact sheet, providing information about the COVID-19 vaccine, and its safety.
- [Simple information on how to get ready for your COVID-19 vaccination \(other languages\)](#)  
This language set contains translations of an easy-to-read fact sheet, with information about how to get ready for your COVID-19 vaccination day.
- [Simple information on what to expect on your COVID-19 vaccination day \(other languages\)](#)  
This language set contains translations of an easy-to-read fact sheet, with information about what to expect on your COVID-19 vaccination day.