

Types of Vaccines

Vaccines currently approved in Australia are:

- Pfizer (Comirnaty)
- AstraZeneca (Vaxzevria)
- Moderna (Spikevax)

Are they safe?¹

Yes. The vaccines have been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration to ensure they are safe and effective. No stages were skipped in the development, testing or approval process

The vaccines are made from ingredients safe for people to use and are proven to help you fight COVID-19.

The vaccines do not contain any animal, meat or egg product or live viruses.

What do they [vaccines] do?

The vaccines train a person's body to recognise and fight the virus without giving you the virus itself. This helps protect you and others around you from getting very sick.

How do they work?

COVID-19 vaccines are delivered in two doses, several weeks apart. The time between your appointments will depend on the type of vaccine you receive.

Who is eligible?²

Anyone living in Australia aged 12 years and over are eligible for COVID-19 vaccines.

How much do they cost?

All COVID-19 vaccines are FREE. You do not need to have a Medicare card.

Why should people be vaccinated?

There are many benefits of being vaccinated for COVID-19 including:

- Reducing your chance of getting very sick and having long-term symptoms.
- Reducing the risk of hospitalisation or intensive care treatment.
- Protecting other people around you from getting sick including your friends and family.
- Reducing your chance of dying.
- Helping to life get back to normal.

Are there side effects?

Sometimes. It depends on the individual.

Common side effects can include headache, fever, chills, tiredness, and pain, redness and swelling at the injection site. Side effects are usually experienced up to 3 days after the vaccine.

Most side effects go away within a couple of days. Less than 1% of people who have received the vaccine in Australia have required medical attention.

Serious side effects are less common and are likely to be experienced between 4-42 days after the vaccine.

Do young people under 18 years need adult permission?

It depends. Young people under the age of 18 typically gain consent from their parent or legal guardian. However, this may not always be possible.

Young people aged 12-17 years who want to receive the vaccine, but do not have parent/guardian consent, can be assessed as a 'mature minor' by the immunising health professional before vaccination.

How to book a vaccine.³

Book online at www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au or call the Public Health Hotline 1800 671 738.

Vaccines are free and available statewide, but there may be a consultation fee at your GP or local pharmacy. Check if there are any costs when you make your booking.

Pfizer vaccines are available through Community Clinics and GPs.
Moderna vaccines can be accessed through pharmacies.

Common Questions, Myths and Concerns.⁴

How can researchers make COVID-19 vaccines so quickly?

COVID-19 vaccines were developed to be safe and effective. Important factors that have allowed us to access vaccines so quickly are:

- Research from previous coronaviruses such as SARS in 2002 and MERS in 2012.
- Researchers starting to develop a vaccine early in the pandemic and using new technology.
- Scientists, manufacturers and distributors worldwide working together.
- Stages of clinical trials and approval process happening at the same time.

COVID-19 isn't as bad for young people.

Why should they get vaccinated?⁵

Since the beginning of the pandemic the COVID-19 virus has mutated, creating several different variants that are impacting people differently. The Delta variant is more easily transmitted between people and has a higher risk of developing serious illness. Almost 48% of cases in Australia are in young people under the age of 30 and 8 young people have died.

Can I catch COVID-19 after getting the vaccine?

Yes. But you are less likely to develop severe symptoms.

Many people hospitalised or receiving intensive care were not vaccinated against COVID-19. If you are vaccinated and catch COVID-19, you are less likely to develop severe illness, have long-term symptoms, require hospital care or die.

Will I get a blood-clot from the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine?

Thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS) is a rare side effect of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine. This condition causes blood clotting and low blood platelet counts and can be very serious and even cause death. Risks of TTS **are not** associated with either Pfizer or Moderna vaccines.

Why do I need the vaccine if everyone else has it?

Some people cannot, or choose not to, have the vaccine for personal, cultural, religious or other reasons. However, herd immunity only works if enough people take the vaccine. People who have been vaccinated can still catch and spread the virus to others, so it is important to consider the risks of not having the vaccine on yourself and others.

Do I have to have two doses of the vaccine?

Yes. All COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in Australia require two doses to be effective. The second dose ensures that your body is creating antibodies to fight the virus if you become infected. It is not yet known if a booster is required to continue protection from COVID-19.

What happens if I miss my second dose?

Get a second dose appointment as soon as you can and discuss how long it has been since your first dose with the immuniser. They will advise you if you may need a third vaccine to complete the course.

Do COVID-19 vaccines cause infertility or sterility?⁶

No. There is no scientific evidence to suggest that fertility or sterility problems are a side effect of ANY vaccine.

The long-term effects of COVID-19 are still being discovered. Early research suggests that getting sick from COVID-19 may cause damage to testicular tissues and adversely impact male fertility.

Is vaccination safe for pregnancy or breastfeeding?

Yes. The Pfizer vaccine is recommended for pregnant and breastfeeding women as well as women planning pregnancy. There are greater risks to you and your unborn child if you catch COVID-19 while pregnant including:

- Greater risk of requiring hospital care for COVID-19.
- Increased chance of your baby being born early.
- Slightly increased chance of your baby being born stillborn.

As a youth worker do I need to give consent for my clients?

No. Young people aged 12-17 years who are unable to obtain parent/guardian consent can be assessed as a 'mature minor' by an immunising health professional on the day. This includes young people who live independently.

What if my client is in OOHC or has a Care and Protection Order?

The Department of Communities Tasmania Secretary has provided generic consent to all young people 12-17 years for COVID-19 vaccination. Any queries should be directed to the young person's Child Safety officer or Advice and Referral Line 1800 000 123.

What if my client cannot give informed consent?

If your client is not assessed as a 'mature minor' consent must be obtained from a parent/guardian. It is the responsibility of the immuniser to gain consent from the parent/guardian.

References

1. <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/approved-vaccines/safety-side-effects>
2. <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/covid-19-vaccine-clinic-finder>
3. <https://www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au/vaccination-information/covid-19-vaccination/Book-your-vaccine>
4. <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/is-it-true>
5. <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/coronavirus-covid-19-case-numbers-and-statistics>. Accessed 7/10/2021.
6. Duarte-Neto, AN, Teixeira, TA, Caldini, EG, *et al.* Testicular pathology in fatal COVID-19: A descriptive autopsy study. *Andrology*. 2021; 1– 11. <https://doi.org/10.1111/andr.13073>