



# COVID-19 vaccines

## Key messages

Current as of 24 August 2021

New and updated key messages are highlighted yellow.

### Contents

<b>Key messages</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Changes to eligibility – 16 years and over</b> .....	<b>2</b>
Why you should get vaccinated .....	2
Who can get vaccinated? .....	2
COVIDSafe behaviours .....	3
<b>COVID-19 vaccines</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Vaccine brands .....	3
Vaccine dose intervals .....	3
Vaccine ingredients .....	4
Vaccine safety .....	4
Side effects .....	4
AstraZeneca and rare blood clotting condition .....	4
AstraZeneca vaccine symptoms to watch out for .....	5
Pfizer symptoms to watch out for .....	5
Second doses .....	6
<b>Getting vaccinated</b> .....	<b>6</b>
Vaccine distribution .....	6
Booking an appointment .....	7
Access to reserved Pfizer appointments .....	7
Online booking system .....	7
Identification options .....	8
<b>Additional information</b> .....	<b>8</b>
Pfizer vaccine for adults under 40 .....	8
People with a disability .....	8
People who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or trying to get pregnant .....	9
Workforces eligible for vaccines .....	9
Young people .....	9

<b>Vaccination sites</b> .....	<b>10</b>
Drive-through sites .....	10
Before you attend a drive-through site .....	10
What happens at a drive-through site .....	10
<b>Vaccine workforce recruitment</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>Further information</b> .....	<b>11</b>

## Key messages

- The COVID-19 vaccines are free, safe and voluntary. The more people who are vaccinated, the greater the protection for those vaccinated and the whole community.
- From Wednesday, 25 August everyone aged 16 years and over is eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine.
- The COVID-19 vaccines are free for everyone in Australia.
- The best person to talk to if you have concerns about your health and being vaccinated against COVID-19 is your doctor or regular health professional.
- Visit the Australian Government website for the latest news and updates on [COVID-19 vaccines](#).
- For the latest vaccine information from the Victorian Department of Health, please visit [coronavirus.vic.gov.au/vaccine](https://coronavirus.vic.gov.au/vaccine).

## Changes to eligibility – 16 years and over

- From Wednesday, 25 August everyone aged 16 years and over is eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccine.
- People aged 18-39 who have already booked for their first vaccine dose at a vaccination centre will be offered the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. They do not need to rebook or change their existing vaccine appointment at a vaccination centre.
- People who have already had a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine will be offered a second dose of the same vaccine brand.
- People are encouraged to book their vaccine at a vaccination centre using the [online booking system](#).

## Why you should get vaccinated

- By getting vaccinated, you are protecting your health, and helping protect your family, friends and community.
- We're not safe until we are all safe.
- Getting a COVID-19 vaccine will help protect you from getting sick from COVID-19. The vaccines are very effective at preventing serious illness and death due to COVID-19.
- As more people get vaccinated, the more the community is protected. This also makes it harder for COVID-19 to spread.
- By limiting the spread of COVID-19, we can also reduce the risk that new variants (strains of COVID-19) could emerge.

## Who can get vaccinated?

- Anyone aged 16 years and over.

- People aged 12-15 years old who have a [medical condition](#) or who are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

## Find out more about who can get vaccinated

- Check the [who can get vaccinated webpage](#).
- You can also register to receive an SMS or email when you become eligible using the [Australian Government's COVID-19 vaccine eligibility checker](#).
- View the [number of doses delivered in Victoria](#).

## COVIDSafe behaviours

- It will take time to distribute and vaccinate enough people to achieve high levels of protection across Australia.
- During the COVID-19 vaccine rollout, you will need to maintain COVIDSafe behaviours, to keep yourself and your friends, family and loved ones safe. Make sure you:
  - Wash your hands with soap and water often. Use hand sanitiser when you can't wash your hands.
  - Keep 1.5 metres distance from other people.
  - Wear a face mask when required to do so.
  - Cough and sneeze into a tissue or your elbow.
  - Follow current public health restrictions.
- If you are unwell, you should get tested for COVID-19 as soon as possible and stay home until you receive a negative result.

## COVID-19 vaccines

### Vaccine brands

You will receive the vaccine you are eligible for. Read more [about COVID-19 vaccines](#).

- In line with the advice of the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI), the Australian Government will prioritise:
  - the [Pfizer vaccine](#) for people aged under 60 years old, and eligible people over 60
  - the [AstraZeneca vaccine for people aged 60 years and over](#).
- **Victorians aged 16-39 will be offered the Pfizer vaccine, the recommended vaccine for their age group.**
- **People aged 18-39 who have already booked for their first vaccine dose at a vaccination centre will be offered the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. They do not need to rebook or change their existing vaccine appointment at a vaccination centre.**
- **People who have already had a first dose of COVID-19 vaccine will be offered a second dose of the same vaccine brand.**
- **Eligible adults aged 18-59 can choose to receive the AstraZeneca vaccine through state vaccination centres, or participating doctor's clinics and pharmacies, respiratory clinics and community health centres.**

### Vaccine dose intervals

- You need two separate doses (injections) of the vaccine to complete the course of vaccination and give you the best level of protection against COVID-19.

- The two doses need to be administered a few weeks apart. The space between doses is usually 6 weeks for Pfizer, and 4-12 weeks for AstraZeneca.

## Vaccine ingredients

- Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines do not contain milk, egg, latex, or pork products.

## Vaccine safety

- Before vaccines are made available in Australia, they need to pass strict safety standards set by Australia's independent medicines regulator, the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA).
- Learn more about [Australia's vaccine program](#).

## Side effects

- Like all medicines and vaccines, COVID-19 vaccines can have some side effects. These symptoms are generally mild and, on average, last a day or two. If you have any concerns about the vaccine, contact your doctor or other health care provider.
- Common reactions to any vaccination include pain where you had the injection (your arm), muscle aches, headache, fatigue or fever.
- After your first appointment, you will be asked to wait at the vaccination site for at least 15 minutes to make sure you feel okay.
- Side effects are mild for most people and are a sign that your immune system is responding to the vaccine.
- You can check your side effects using the [Australian Government's Department of Health Side Effect Checker](#). Serious side effects such as allergic reactions or anaphylaxis are extremely rare. If this occurs, vaccination providers have medicines available to effectively and immediately treat the reaction.
- If you have previously had an allergic reaction to a vaccine, it is important that you speak with your doctor before receiving a COVID-19 vaccine.

## AstraZeneca and rare blood clotting condition

- A very rare, but serious condition involving clotting with low blood platelet count has been reported after AstraZeneca vaccine. This is called thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS)
- TTS is more common after the first dose of AstraZeneca with reported rates of 2-3 per 100,000 people vaccinated. The risk is higher in those aged under 60. TTS is more rarely reported after the second dose – research shows this could be as low as one in every million people vaccinated.
- The blood clots can occur at different parts of the body, including the brain (this is called cerebral venous sinus thrombosis) and in the abdomen.
- The symptoms of this condition mostly start between 4 and 30 days after vaccination.
- People with this condition get very unwell and need to go to hospital. This condition can lead to long-term disability and, very rarely, death.
- We now have tests that can help confirm this condition and new ways of effectively treating TTS. As a result, most people who have developed this condition in Australia have responded well to treatment, are recovering, and are stable.
- The AstraZeneca vaccine should not be used in people who have a history of:
  - CVST, heparin-induced thrombocytopenia (HIT)
  - idiopathic splanchnic (mesenteric, portal and splenic) venous thrombosis
  - anti-phospholipid syndrome with thrombosis

- TTS, or
- capillary leak syndrome.

This is a precautionary measure. Patients with a history of these conditions should therefore not be vaccinated with the AstraZeneca vaccine and should be referred to their closest geographical VicSIS clinic for further assessment.

- For more information about AstraZeneca visit the [Australian Government Department of Health](#).

## AstraZeneca vaccine symptoms to watch out for

After your AstraZeneca vaccine, go to the doctor straight away if you:

- a headache that can start anytime following vaccination and last beyond 48 hours post vaccination. It might also:
  - be mild (light) or strong (hurt a lot).
  - feel worse when you lie down.
  - go away for a little while when you take pain relief like paracetamol, but then come back.
- Throw up (or you feel like you want to throw up).
  - If you have this symptom remember to stay hydrated.
- Have blurry vision.
- Have weakness in your arms, legs or face.
- Find it hard to speak.
- Feel sleepy or confused.
- Have seizures.
- Have pain in your abdomen (tummy) that won't go away.
- Find it hard to take deep breaths, or your chest hurts.
- Find your legs are sore, red or swollen.

Have small blood spots under your skin, more bruising than normal or bleeding. (Small blood spots where the needle went in are OK).

If you experience any of these symptoms, seek immediate medical attention. Tell the doctor you have recently had the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine.

View more on [thrombosis thrombocytopenia syndrome \(TTS\) and related symptoms](#).

## Pfizer symptoms to watch out for

### Myocarditis or pericarditis

- There is a very rare risk of serious side effects that impact your heart – these conditions are called myocarditis or pericarditis and can occur after receiving a Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine.
- Myocarditis is the inflammation of the heart muscle, and pericarditis is the inflammation of the thin sac that surrounds the heart.
- Most people who have experienced these heart conditions following vaccination with Pfizer have required hospitalisation. However, they have responded well to standard treatment. Patients have recovered quickly with treatment.
- After your Pfizer vaccine, go to the doctor straight away if:
  - You feel pain or pressure in your chest.
  - It hurts when you breathe.
  - You find it hard to take deep breaths.

- You have an irregular heartbeat, skipped beats or 'fluttering' feelings in your chest.
- You faint.
- If you experience these symptoms you should immediately seek medical attention. You need to tell the doctor you see that you have recently had a Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine.
- When diagnosed early there are effective treatments available and many people recover without long-term impacts.

## Second doses

- All Victorians will receive two separate doses of a COVID-19 vaccine to give them the best protection against COVID-19.
- The two doses need to be given several weeks apart. You should wait:
  - six weeks between doses for the Pfizer vaccine
  - 12 weeks between doses for the AstraZeneca vaccine.
- The first COVID vaccine dose will give you significant protection against COVID-19 while you wait for your second dose.
- The second dose will provide you with the highest level of protection against COVID-19.
- People who have had their first dose of AstraZeneca without any serious adverse effects can be given the second dose. This includes adults under 60 years.
- There are a few options to book your second dose:
  - call the health service that provided your first dose
  - use the [online booking system](#).
  - use the hotline to book an appointment at one of Victoria's vaccination centres.
- If you have any questions about the timing of your second dose, speak with your doctor or immuniser.
- If you received your first dose at a state-run vaccination clinic, you can book in your second dose at any vaccination clinic in Victoria or at your local doctor's clinic.
- You do not need to receive the second dose at the same location as the first.

## Getting vaccinated

### Vaccine distribution

- COVID-19 vaccines are being delivered through doctors' clinics, hospital hubs, [vaccination centres](#), community health services, [pharmacies](#), and outreach programs to specific workplaces and residential care facilities.
- To make an appointment at a vaccination centre, use the online booking system or call 1800 675 398.
- Some vaccination centres are accepting walk ins.
- To make an appointment at a doctor's clinic, community health service or [pharmacy](#), use the [Australian Government Eligibility Checker](#) to find a provider near you. You can also book directly with a vaccine provider.
- We encourage people who are pregnant to get vaccinated at their doctor's clinic or health care provider.
- People who are pregnant can also get vaccinated at Victoria's vaccination centres.
- Residents of border towns are encouraged to get vaccinated at their nearest vaccination centre or doctor's clinic, even if it is not in their home state. Note:
  - Victorians who live near the South Australian or New South Wales border can get vaccinated at their nearest vaccination centre or their doctor's clinic, even if it is not in Victoria

- people who live in South Australia or New South Wales can be vaccinated in Victoria if that is their nearest vaccination centre or participating doctor's clinic.

## Booking an appointment

- Learn more about how to [book your vaccine appointment](#) in the section below.
- If you cannot get an appointment at your preferred location, you should continue to check back, as more appointments will become available over the coming weeks.
- You do not need a Medicare card to get a vaccine. If you do not have a Medicare card, you can apply for an [Individual Health Identifier \(IHI\) number](#).
- You do not get to choose which vaccine you receive. Both vaccines protect you against getting COVID-19 and against getting sick if you do get COVID-19.

## Access to reserved Pfizer appointments

- To help people who are at higher risk of contracting or getting very sick from COVID-19 get vaccinated, appointments are being reserved at vaccination centres. The following people can access Pfizer first dose appointments regardless of age:
  - All health care workers
  - Public and private residential aged care and disability care workers and residents
  - Hotel quarantine and border workers
  - Household contacts of hotel quarantine and border workers
  - Meat and seafood processing worker and associated cold chain transportation
  - People who are vulnerable and at high risk from COVID-19, including residents in high-risk accommodation, people with a specified medical condition or people with a significant disability.
- To book a reserved appointment call the Coronavirus Hotline on 1800 675 398.

## Online booking system

- You can now book or change a vaccination appointment at a vaccination centre through the [Victorian Government's COVID-19 vaccine online booking system](#).
- The booking system is free and easy to use to help you book into your COVID-19 vaccine at a vaccination centre. Eligible people can use the booking system to schedule their COVID-19 vaccination. [Find out if you are eligible to get a COVID-19 vaccine](#).
- You can use the online booking system on your phone or computer. Note, Internet Explorer is **not supported** and the system works best with Google Chrome or Microsoft Edge.
- You will need to complete a questionnaire about your vaccination history before choosing when and where to get your vaccine.
- Once you have made a booking, you will automatically receive a confirmation email with everything you need to attend your appointment.
- You can also use the online booking system to change an appointment you have already made, including a booking you made by calling the Victorian Coronavirus Hotline.
- To cancel an appointment, you must call the Victorian Coronavirus Hotline on [1800 675 398](#).
- You will get a reminder to book your second vaccine dose – you will need two doses to get the best protection.

## Identification options

- The vaccines are free. This includes for Australian citizens, permanent residents, refugees, people seeking asylum, temporary and provisional visa holders (including international students and temporary migrants).
- All people residing in Victoria will be able to access a vaccination, regardless of visa status.
- Some form of identification is needed as you are being provided with a medical product, and this needs to be recorded. It also helps prevent errors such as timing required between vaccinations or individuals receiving too many doses. Take your identification and Medicare card (if you have one) to your vaccination appointment.
- If you do not have a standard form of identification, this should not become a barrier to vaccination.
- If you do not have standard photo identification such as a driver's licence or passport, you can bring along other documentation such as refugee documents, mail from government departments, or utility bills.
- If you do not have a Medicare card, you can obtain an Individual Health Identifier (IHI) number. To do this, you will need to complete and submit a [Request or update an Individual Healthcare Identifier form](#). You can also visit a Medicare office to get an IHI. **High-risk accommodation response lead providers** should support residents to get an IHI if necessary.
- Vaccinations are safe, effective and free. Choosing to get vaccinated or not will have no impact on housing access or leases.
- No identifiable personal information from the vaccination process will be shared with housing agencies.

## Additional information

### Pfizer vaccine for adults under 40

From Wednesday, 25 August, all Victorians aged 16-39 will be eligible to get the Pfizer vaccine. People who have already booked to receive AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine at a vaccination centre will automatically have this switched over to Pfizer. You do not need to reschedule or change your appointment.

People aged 18-39 years can choose to receive the AstraZeneca vaccine but must provide informed consent. Informed consent involves acknowledging you are aware of the risks of receiving the AstraZeneca vaccine, including the risk of [thrombosis thrombocytopenia syndrome \(TTS\)](#).

Watch out for symptoms of TTS up to one month after your vaccine. Speak with your doctor immediately if you think you may have any symptoms, even if they are minor.

### People with a disability

- Everyone aged 16 years and over is eligible to get a COVID-19 vaccine. Young people aged 12 –15 years if they:
  - have an [underlying medical condition](#) including people who are living with significant disability requiring frequent assistance with activities of daily living
  - are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- Carers and volunteers can help protect themselves, people they care for, and their families by getting vaccinated.



## People who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or trying to get pregnant

### Pregnant women

- The recommendation to allow pregnant women to have the Pfizer vaccine is based on expert advice from both the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) and [Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists \(RANZCOG\)](#). [Read the joint ATAGI and RANZOG statement](#).
- Pregnant people who received their first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine can receive a second dose of AstraZeneca or Pfizer, although Pfizer is preferred.
- Pregnant people should speak with their health care provider about the best choice for them. Global surveillance data from large numbers of pregnant women have not found any significant safety concerns with COVID-19 vaccines given at any stage of pregnancy. There is also evidence of antibody in blood and breastmilk, which may offer protection to infants through passive immunity.
- Pregnant women are encouraged to discuss the best timing of for their vaccination with their health professional.
- Learn more on the [Australian Government's webpage for women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or planning pregnancy](#).

### Women who are breastfeeding or trying to get pregnant

- The Australian Government's advice remains unchanged for people trying to become pregnant and breastfeeding:
  - Women who are trying to become pregnant do not need to delay vaccination or avoid becoming pregnant after vaccination.
  - If you are breastfeeding, you can have the Pfizer vaccine or the AstraZeneca vaccine. You do not need to stop breastfeeding after vaccination.
- Learn more on the [Australian Government's webpage for women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or planning pregnancy](#).
- Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation will provide further advice on the broader 12-15 year age group in coming months. As more COVID-19 vaccine doses become available more people will be able to get vaccinated.
- Eligible young people and their parents or guardians should speak to their doctor **or regular health professional** if they have questions about the COVID-19 vaccine and their health.

## Workforces eligible for vaccines

- Common side effects can appear in the first three days after vaccination. These symptoms may impact work duties including missing work following vaccination.
- AusVaxSafety is a national vaccine safety surveillance system, which sends short surveys via SMS and email to collect reports of side effects to help monitor vaccine safety.
- Reported missing work, study or routine duties (absenteeism) after vaccination data is available each week on the AusVaxSafety website.
- This data is based on the people who respond to these surveys, which is about two thirds of total people who receive a vaccine.
- Workplaces may wish to use reported percentages of absenteeism to guide workforce planning.

## Young people

- Only the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine has been approved for people aged 12-18 years.

- Young people aged 16 years and over are now eligible to get their COVID-19 vaccine.
- Children, adolescents, and young adults with underlying medical conditions have an increased likelihood of developing severe disease and complications if they catch COVID-19. The Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine is effective at protecting young people against COVID-19.
- Eligible young people aged 12- 15 are encouraged to get their COVID-19 vaccine at their doctor's clinic or health care provider. If you get your COVID-19 vaccine at your doctor's clinic, your doctor can use your medical records to confirm whether you are eligible.
- Eligible young people can also get vaccinated at Victoria's vaccination centres.
- Eligibility has been changed based on the latest advice from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI). ATAGI has carefully evaluated evidence on the safety and effectiveness of the Pfizer vaccine for young people. The evidence includes clinical studies with young people aged 12-15 years. The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has approved the use of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for people aged 12-15.

## Vaccination sites

### Drive-through sites

There are now three drive-through vaccination sites operating in Victoria. They are located at the:

- Ford Complex (Campbellfield) – 358 Barry Road
- Sandown Racecourse (Springvale) – 591-659 Princes Highway, and
- former Bunnings (West Melton) – 149 Barries Road.

For full details of the centres, including operating hours, visit the [Vaccination centres page on the Victorian Government Coronavirus website](#).

You must make a [booking online](#) or by calling the Coronavirus Hotline on 1800 675 398. You should be prepared to wait to receive your COVID-19 vaccine.

You cannot leave your car when you go to the drive-through site. People receiving a COVID-19 vaccine must be seated next to a window that opens so that staff can reach your upper arm.

You must go to this site in a car in order to get a vaccine.

### Before you attend a drive-through site

Do not attend a vaccine appointment if you feel any symptoms that may be connected to COVID-19. Learn about [where to get tested for COVID-19](#).

Check the [vaccination centres](#) page before you attend the site to get more information on opening hours and wait times.

Wear a mask and follow all staff directions when you go to the site.

The drive-through vaccination centre is not available for buses or other large vehicles (such as trucks).

Complete this [checklist: before your COVID-19 vaccination](#).

### What happens at a drive-through site

You will be screened for eligibility, symptoms and isolation status at entry. You will not be allowed to get your vaccination if you are ineligible. Check [who can get a COVID-19 vaccine](#).

Staff at the centre will tell you when to move your car and when to turn your engine off. Please drive slowly and follow speed limits.

After your vaccination, staff will monitor you for 15 minutes while you stay in your car. Staff will tell you what to do if you feel unwell during this time.

Once the observation period is complete, staff will tell you when you can start your car and leave.

## Vaccine workforce recruitment

- We are continuing to support Australia's COVID-19 vaccination rollout, with Victoria leading the nation in the number of vaccinations administered by state-run centres.
- To support the record surge in demand from Victorians to get vaccinated and to continue to expand the program to more Victorians, we are bolstering our workforce.
- We are calling on all eligible health care workers to register to be part of the COVID-19 vaccine delivery in Victoria.
- Pharmacists and technicians, health professionals who have recently retired, and final-year medical, nursing, midwifery, paramedicine and pharmacy students are being asked to register their interest to be part of the program.
- To ensure COVID-19 vaccines continue to be delivered to the highest standards of safety, new recruits will need to complete a comprehensive and free training program.
- People who are accepted through the recruitment process and who complete the training program may be assessed by a supervisor. They may also be supervised by an experienced immuniser when delivering COVID-19 vaccines.
- New vaccination workforce recruits will deliver COVID-19 vaccines through vaccination centres.
- The Department of Health has partnered with Torrens Health to place registered vaccinators within the Victorian health system. We thank those members of our dedicated health workforce who have already registered to the Torrens platform and who have been willing to support the community during the pandemic.
- People who are eligible can register through [Torrens Health](#).
- The Victorian Government is committed to supporting the delivery of the Australian Government's COVID-19 vaccination program.

## Further information

- You can find more information about the Australian Government vaccine program by visiting the [Australian Government Department of Health website](#).
- To find out when you can receive a COVID-19 vaccine, use the Australian Government's [Eligibility Checker](#) to find out when you can receive a COVID-19 vaccine.
- Depending on your eligibility you can either find a vaccine provider and book an appointment or register to receive an email or SMS when you are able to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.
- You can find out more about the vaccines that the Australian Government has secured by visiting the [Australian Government Department of Health website](#).
- You can find information about the COVID-19 vaccine rollout in Victoria by visiting [coronavirus.vic.gov.au/vaccine](https://coronavirus.vic.gov.au/vaccine).

- To receive this document in another format, phone 1300 651 160, using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or email [COVIDvaccination@dhhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:COVIDvaccination@dhhs.vic.gov.au)
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