COVID-19 VACCINATION

How workers in residential aged care can get a COVID-19 vaccination

Information current as at 27 April 2021

The Australian Government is making it as easy as possible for workers in residential aged care to get vaccinated quickly and safely.

The vaccination of aged care residents and those who care for them is the most effective protection against COVID-19. Residents are receiving their vaccinations first because they are most at risk from severe illness or death from COVID-19.

Thank you for your patience while we updated the planned rollout for aged care workers to align with recent medical advice that recommends the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine is preferred for people aged under 50.

COVID-19 vaccine safety in Australia

It is normal to have questions about the new COVID-19 vaccines and to possibly feel hesitant about getting the vaccine.

Throughout the pandemic, the Australian Government continues to follow expert medical advice. Your safety is the number one priority.

There are currently two safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines available in Australia, AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccines. Both vaccines are highly effective at preventing death and severe illness among people who contract COVID-19.

As is the case with all health professionals, workers in residential aged care will be offered a COVID-19 vaccine depending on their age, in line with the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) recommendations:

- **People aged 50 years and over** will receive the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine.
- **People aged under 50 years** will receive the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine.

Protecting older Australians, yourself and the broader community

While Australia has been relatively successful in avoiding sustained COVID-19 outbreaks, the risk of community transmission remains significant.

COVID-19 is much more likely to be severe in older people and people with certain medical problems than in young healthy people. Experience from the second wave, particularly in Victoria, is that one third of people aged over 80 who contract COVID-19 will not survive.

For this reason, our focus is on protecting people who are most vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19 and those who care for them – including our aged care workers.

How can workers access a COVID-19 vaccination?

There are several ways you can access a COVID-19 vaccine.

Some options are on-site at the residential aged care facility where you work. Others are off-site, at locations you can visit outside of your workplace. Importantly, some options are only available depending on your age.

1. GP options for aged care workers aged 50 and over

Available now: Aged care workers aged 50 years and over can access an AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccination at a GP clinic, GP respiratory clinic or Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service.

Find a participating clinic through the **eligibility checker** on the Department of Health website.

2. State and territory vaccination clinics for residential aged care workers (Pfizer for workers aged under 50 and AstraZeneca for workers aged 50 and over)

State and Territory clinics are coming on line progressively: All aged care workers can visit state and territory vaccination clinics to receive the appropriate COVID-19 vaccine in line with the recent recommendations by the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI).

Details for the different state and territory clinics will be included in the eligibility checker. If you can't find details for nearby clinics please check regularly as the listings will be updated as clinics become available.

Arrangements for different states and territories clinics are happening progressively:

> **ACT**: clinic details to be published on the eligibility checker on 3 May
> **NSW**: your Local Health District will contact your facility directly to advise arrangements
> **NT:** details to be advised shortly
> **QLD:** clinic details to be published on the eligibility checker on 3 May
> **SA:** clinic details to be published on the eligibility checker on 3 May
> **TAS:** clinic details to be published on the eligibility checker on 3 May
> **VIC:** details to be advised shortly
> **WA:** details to be advised shortly.

3. Dedicated ('pop-up') Pfizer vaccination clinics for workers aged under 50

Clinics commencing from 3 May: Residential aged care and disability workers under 50 years will be able to book an appointment at dedicated Commonwealth vaccination clinics offering the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine.

The first clinics will open in Sydney from 3 May, with a rollout across other locations in the coming weeks. These clinics are restricted to residential aged care and disability workers only.

Sydney-based residential aged care facilities are being contacted directly with booking information. If you work at a Sydney-based residential aged care facility, your facility manager can provide you with a link to the online booking system.

The Sydney Pfizer clinics will be located in:

- **Blacktown** – open Monday 3 May from 10am to 6pm on day one, and then from 8am to 6pm, seven days a week

- **Campbelltown** – open Monday 10 May from 8am to 6pm, seven days a week

- **Sydney CBD** – open Monday 24 May from 8am to 6pm, seven days a week

- **Macquarie Park** – open Monday 24 May from 2pm to 10pm Monday – Friday, and 8am to 6pm Saturday and Sunday.

For other locations, when clinics become available, we will notify your workplace and provide them with booking details to share with you and the full details will be published on the health.gov.au website.

4. On-site vaccination clinics for residential aged care workers

Available now for RACFs that wish to participate: Participating residential aged care facilities can choose to conduct their own on-site vaccination clinics with the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine for workers aged 50 years and over and/or the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for workers aged under 50 years.

GP's can also conduct AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccination clinics for aged care workers aged 50 years and over, at the request of residential aged care facilities.

Primary Health Networks will coordinate visits between GP's and residential aged care facilities if required.

Speak to your employer to find out if the option of on-site vaccination clinics is available to you**.**

Frequently asked questions

What identification do I need to take to my vaccination appointment?

Residential aged care workers can confirm their eligibility by providing one of the following documents:

- **proof of age** (e.g. driver's licence, passport, birth certificate)

- **proof of employment** (e.g. one of the following)
    - current work ID card showing employment in a relevant occupation
    - letter from employer or payslip confirming you are currently employed at a residential aged care facility,
    - completed Eligibility Declaration Form

- **Medicare card** if you have one.

You should take this identification with you to your appointment. Your eligibility will be checked when you arrive for your vaccination.

I'm not sure whether to get the vaccine, how can I decide?

While the COVID-19 vaccine is not mandatory, it is strongly recommended – especially for vulnerable Australians and those who care for them.

When you decide to receive a vaccine it's important you understand the benefits and risks associated with both:
- receiving the vaccine, and
- not receiving the vaccine.

It is also important that you are aware of side effects that may occur. Understanding these benefits and risks can help you to make an informed decision.

If you're unsure, it's a good idea to speak with your GP or other health professional. They can help you make a decision that is right for your personal situation.

A decision guide is also available to help you make an informed choice about getting vaccinated.

Why are people 50 years and over receiving the AstraZeneca vaccine?

The risk of serious illness from COVID-19 far outweighs the potential risk of side effects from the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine.

This is particularly the case for Australians aged 50 and over, who are far more vulnerable to severe impacts from COVID-19 than in young healthy people.

It's important to know that the AstraZeneca vaccine:
- is highly effective at preventing death and severe illness among people who have contracted COVID-19
- the incidence of the blood-clotting syndrome is very rare.

I am aged 50 years or over, can I wait longer and get the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine?

Access to any COVID-19 vaccine approved for use in Australia is prioritised, ensuring those at greatest risk are vaccinated first. Specific vaccines will be administered based on availability and clinical guidance on appropriate vaccines for people.

Can I get a flu vaccine at the same time as a COVID-19 vaccine?

It is recommended you wait 14 days between getting a flu vaccine and a COVID-19 vaccine. It is important to plan for both vaccinations.

Flu vaccinations for residents and staff should occur:
- 14 or more days **before** your first Pfizer dose
- 14 or more days **after** your second (and final) Pfizer dose
- 14 or more days **before or after** your first AstraZeneca dose
- 14 or more days **before or after** your second (and final) AstraZeneca dose.

More information
- visit health.gov.au/covid19-vaccines
- call the National COVID-19 Vaccine Helpline on **1800 020 080**
- view COVID-19 vaccine information in your language.