# COVID-19 VACCINE

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe?

The Therapeutic Goods Administration is responsible for regulating vaccines in Australia and has strict requirements including a rigorous testing, assessment and approvals process. There will be different types of the vaccine available, but every vaccine delivered in Australia has to be rigorously tested and approved by experts first.

## How is a vaccine approved for use in Australia?

The COVID-19 vaccines being used in Australia have been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration and are administered under the advice of the COVID-19 Vaccine and Treatments for Australia – Science and Industry Technical Advisory Group and the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI).

Before any vaccine is approved for use in Australia, including a COVID-19 vaccine, it must pass the Therapeutic Goods Administration's rigorous assessment and approval processes. This includes assessment of its safety, quality and effectiveness.

**Therapeutic Goods Administration:** *www.tga.gov.au/covid-19-vaccines*

## How do vaccines work?

Vaccines work to strengthen a person's immune system by training it to recognise and fight against specific germs that can cause serious illnesses, like COVID-19.

Vaccines insert weakened or inactivated virus into the body, so that the immune system can recognise these germs as being foreign and start to create antibodies to protect against future infection. Vaccines are a safe way of triggering an immune response in the body without causing illness.

If you come into contact with the disease in the future, your body remembers it and your immune system works to quickly stop the disease from developing.

You are far less likely to catch a virus or disease if you have been vaccinated. Immunisation not only protects you but protects your family and those in the community by reducing the spread of the virus.

## How will I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

You can book your COVID-19 vaccine appointment at dedicated COVID-19 vaccination centres, participating GP clinics, respiratory clinics, community pharmacies or Aboriginal health clinics.

NT Health is providing the vaccine to Aboriginal people in communities where it is the primary health care provider.

**Booking a COVID-19 vaccine:** *https://coronavirus.nt.gov.au*

## When will I get the COVID-19 vaccine?

All people aged 5 years and over in the Northern Territory are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

**Booking a COVID-19 vaccine:** *https://coronavirus.nt.gov.au*

## Do I get to choose what type of vaccine I get?

The Therapeutic Goods Administration approves vaccines that meet the high safety, efficacy and quality standards required for use in Australia.

In the Northern Territory the following COVID-19 vaccines are available:

- Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine
- AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine
- Moderna COVID-19 vaccine

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) recommends the paediatric Pfizer vaccine for 5 to 11 year olds. Speak to your health care provider or vaccination centre about what vaccines they have available.

## Are there side effects to getting the vaccine?

As with any vaccine, you may experience some side effects after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine. Side effects are normal and a good sign that the vaccine is working.

### Common side effects include:

- pain or swelling at the injection site
- tiredness
- headache
- muscle pain
- joint pain
- redness or itching at the injection site
- nausea
- fever and chills
- insomnia
- feeling unwell

These side effects are usually mild and go away within one or two days.

If you experience pain at the injection site or fever, headaches or body aches after vaccination, you can take paracetamol or ibuprofen. If there is swelling at the injection site, you can use a cold compress.

### You should seek medical attention after vaccination if:

- You think you are having an allergic reaction. Call 000 if you experience severe symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, wheezing, a fast heartbeat or collapsing.
- You are worried about a potential side effect or have new or unexpected symptoms.
- You are experiencing severe and on-going headaches.
- You have an expected side effect of the vaccine which has not gone away after a few days.

For symptoms which are not urgent, you can see your regular healthcare provider.

### Can I get the vaccine if I'm not an Australian resident?

People who are not Australian residents can still get the vaccine for free. The vaccine is available for all residents, temporary visa holders including international students. Temporary visa holders can get their vaccine at the Palmerston Super Clinic and at NT Health Clinics.

### Can I get the vaccine if I don't have a Medicare card?

If you don't have a Medicare Card, you can still get the COVID-19 vaccine for free. To do this you will need to get an Individual Health Identifier (IHI) through Services Australia.

You can do this by:

- Going into your nearest Centrelink office to apply for an IHI.
- Downloading and completing the Request or Update an Individual Healthcare Identifier Form from the Services Australia website.
- Submitting your IHI application with certified copies of your proof of identity via email, post or fax or by lodging it at your nearest Centrelink office.

**Apply for an Individual Health Identifier:** *www.servicesaustralia.gov.au*

### What is in the COVID-19 vaccine?

Ingredients for the COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in Australia are listed on the Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods.

There is no formaldehyde or toxic substances in the approved COVID-19 vaccines.

**View the full list of ingredients on the TGA website:** *https://www.tga.gov.au*

### Do the vaccines contain any animal products?

The approved COVID-19 vaccines do not contain any animal or egg products.

### What opinion do faith leaders hold on COVID-19 vaccines?

The COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in Australia are permitted by many faith leaders.

On 22 December 2020, the Vatican released a statement to support the use of COVID-19 vaccines. **You can read the Vatican's statement at:** *https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/ cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20201221_nota-vaccini-anticovid_en.html*

The Australian Fatwa Council issued a COVID-19 Vaccine Fatwa on 13 February 2021. The Fatwa was issued after researching and discussing COVID-19 vaccines with trusted and credible Muslim doctors and medical experts. The Fatwa advises Australia's COVID-19 vaccines are permissible according to the Islamic law. **You can read the Australian Fatwa Council's COVID-19 Vaccine Fatwa at:** *www.anic.org.au/fatwa-council*

The Great Synagogue Sydney published a Sermon on 27 February 2021 supporting the use of COVID-19 vaccines. **You can read the Sermon at:** *www.greatsynagogue.org.au/rabbiscorner.htm*

### Can I bring someone to my vaccination appointment with me?

You can have someone attend your vaccination appointment for support. This can be a family member, carer, friend or support worker.

## Can I have the vaccine if I am planning on getting pregnant, pregnant or breastfeeding?

You can get the COVID-19 vaccine if you are pregnant or breastfeeding. Ask your doctor or pharmacist for advice if you have any questions about getting the vaccine.

## Do I need to get the flu vaccine?

This year, you will need three vaccines to stay healthy – 1 flu vaccine and 2 COVID-19 vaccines. It is still important to make sure you get the flu vaccine in the lead up to the flu season. Anyone over 6 months of age should get the influenza vaccination, even if they are not eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine.

Kids under 5 years (and over 6 months) are at high risk from the flu and can get a free flu vaccine through the National Immunisation Program. Pregnant women are at high risk from the flu and should get a flu vaccination while pregnant. Pregnant women should seek advice from their GP before getting the COVID-19 vaccine.

## Is there information available in other languages?

There is a wealth of reliable information available on the Australian Government Department of Health website and much of this information has also been translated into many multicultural and Aboriginal languages.

**Australian Government Department of Health:** *https://www.australia.gov.au/covid19vaccines*

## Where can I find more information?

The best thing you can do is to stay up to date with the latest information using trusted sources.

**Northern Territory Government – COVID-19:** *www.coronavirus.nt.gov.au*

**Australian Government Department of Health:** *www.health.gov.au*

**National COVID-19 Helpline:** *1800 020 080*

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