

# COVID-19 vaccines

Newsletter – 16 February 2021

Information for COVID-19 vaccine providers

**OFFICIAL**

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## Latest updates

- From 11:59pm on 12 February 2021 new circuit breaker actions are in place to stop the spread of COVID-19 across Victoria.
- The first stage of the Australian Government's COVID-19 vaccination program will be ready to be rolled out in Victoria for priority groups in phase 1a – including people who are at higher risk of contracting COVID-19 or of severe illness – at nine suburban and regional health services across the state (vaccine hubs) as soon as the vaccine is available. Read more about [who will get the vaccine first](https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/getting-vaccinated-for-covid-19/who-will-get-the-vaccines) <<https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/getting-vaccinated-for-covid-19/who-will-get-the-vaccines>>.
- The Australian Government is responsible for the delivery of vaccines to states and territories.
- The Victorian Government is working closely with the Australian Government to ensure the vaccination program is implemented rapidly, safely and equitably using evidence-based research.
- On 25 January 2021, the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) announced provisional approval of the Pfizer/BioNTech (Pfizer) COVID-19 vaccine for use in Australia.
- The TGA's decision was informed by the Advisory Committee on Vaccines – an independent group of clinical and scientific experts with consumer representation.
- The Pfizer vaccine is the first COVID-19 vaccine to receive regulatory approval in Australia, undergoing the required assessment and approval process and meeting high safety, efficacy and quality standards.

- The Australian Government advises the first doses of the Pfizer vaccine are expected to be available in Victoria from 22 February 2021 to allow us to start vaccinating the first Victorians, subject to shipping and distribution.
- The rollout of other vaccines, including the Oxford/AstraZeneca (AstraZeneca) vaccine, will depend on the Australian Government's regulatory approval, volume and timing of doses becoming available.
- During the vaccine roll out it is critical that we all continue to be [COVIDSafe](https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covidsafe-summer) <<https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covidsafe-summer>>.
- The COVID-19 vaccines will be free to all people who choose to be vaccinated.

## Latest resources

The Australian Government has released the following information:

- [Which COVID-19 vaccine people who choose to get immunised will receive](https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/getting-vaccinated-for-covid-19/which-covid-19-vaccine-will-i-receive) <<https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/getting-vaccinated-for-covid-19/which-covid-19-vaccine-will-i-receive>>
- [Vaccine information for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities](https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/getting-vaccinated-for-covid-19/information-for-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples-about-covid-19-vaccines) <<https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/getting-vaccinated-for-covid-19/information-for-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples-about-covid-19-vaccines>>
- [Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation \(ATAGI\) clinical guidance on use of COVID-19 vaccine in Australia in 2021](https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/02/covid-19-vaccination-atagi-clinical-guidance-on-covid-19-vaccine-in-australia-in-2021.pdf) <<https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/02/covid-19-vaccination-atagi-clinical-guidance-on-covid-19-vaccine-in-australia-in-2021.pdf>>
- [COVID-19 vaccination decision guide for women who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or planning pregnancy](https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/02/covid-19-vaccination-covid-19-vaccination-decision-guide-for-women-who-are-pregnant-breastfeeding-or-planning-pregnancy-covid-19-vaccination-decision-guide-for-women-who-are-pregnant-breastfeeding-or-planning-pregnancy_0.pdf) <[https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/02/covid-19-vaccination-covid-19-vaccination-decision-guide-for-women-who-are-pregnant-breastfeeding-or-planning-pregnancy-covid-19-vaccination-decision-guide-for-women-who-are-pregnant-breastfeeding-or-planning-pregnancy\\_0.pdf](https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/02/covid-19-vaccination-covid-19-vaccination-decision-guide-for-women-who-are-pregnant-breastfeeding-or-planning-pregnancy-covid-19-vaccination-decision-guide-for-women-who-are-pregnant-breastfeeding-or-planning-pregnancy_0.pdf)>
- [Vaccine information for people with disability](https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/getting-vaccinated-for-covid-19/information-for-people-with-disability-about-covid-19-vaccines) <<https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/getting-vaccinated-for-covid-19/information-for-people-with-disability-about-covid-19-vaccines>>
- [Multicultural and multilingual communities implementation plan](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/covid-19-vaccination-program-culturally-and-linguistically-diverse-communities-implementation-plan) <<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/covid-19-vaccination-program-culturally-and-linguistically-diverse-communities-implementation-plan>>
- [Expression of interest for pharmacies](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/community-pharmacy-covid-19-vaccine-rollout-from-phase-2a) <<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/community-pharmacy-covid-19-vaccine-rollout-from-phase-2a>> to support Phase 2a of the vaccine rollout
- The [COVID-19 vaccine aged care stakeholder kit](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/covid-19-vaccine-aged-care-stakeholder-kit) <<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/covid-19-vaccine-aged-care-stakeholder-kit>> for aged care residents, workers and their families
- [Australia's COVID-19 vaccine national rollout strategy](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/australias-covid-19-vaccine-national-roll-out-strategy) <<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/australias-covid-19-vaccine-national-roll-out-strategy>>

## Delivery of COVID-19 vaccines

### Priority groups

Australia's COVID-19 vaccines will be available in phases, as defined by the Australian Government's schedule, with groups prioritised based on [expert medical and public health advice](https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/getting-vaccinated-for-covid-19/who-will-get-the-vaccines) <<https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/getting-vaccinated-for-covid-19/who-will-get-the-vaccines>>.

People eligible to receive priority access to a COVID-19 vaccine as part of Phase 1a include:

- quarantine and border workers and all staff working in the hotel quarantine program

- frontline at-risk healthcare workers, including hospital staff working in COVID-19 and suspected COVID-19 wards, emergency department and intensive care unit staff, staff at general practice respiratory clinics and COVID-19 testing facilities, and ambulance staff and paramedics
- aged care and disability care staff and residents.

## Vaccine hubs

Victorians at greatest risk of COVID-19 will initially be able to receive the COVID-19 vaccine at the following Victorian public hospital vaccination hubs:

- Albury Wodonga Health
- Austin Health
- Ballarat Health
- Barwon Health
- Bendigo Health
- Goulburn Valley Health
- Latrobe Regional Hospital
- Monash Health
- Western Health

Pending delivery of the vaccine, the first Pfizer doses will initially be distributed to four hubs from 22 February 2021: Austin Health, Barwon Health, Monash Health (in partnership with Alfred Health) and Western Health.

In addition to these initial hospital vaccine hubs for the Pfizer vaccine, work is underway to identify sites across Victoria to ensure all Victorians can easily access other COVID-19 vaccines when they become available.

## AstraZeneca vaccine

The Australian Government has advised that the AstraZeneca vaccine may be available from early March 2021, although this is dependent on TGA approval and distribution of the vaccine to states and territories.

Unlike the Pfizer vaccine, the AstraZeneca vaccine is refrigerated at conventional cold-chain temperatures and will be available to the Victorian community through a far greater range of vaccination sites.

The Victorian Department of Health (the department) is dedicated to continuing engagement with our partners and stakeholders to roll out the COVID-19 vaccines. The Australian Government is leading the expression of interest process for general practices and pharmacies to participate in the rollout at various phases.

## Surge workforce consultation

The department recognises that significant expansion of the current immuniser workforce in Victoria will be required to deliver the Australian Government's COVID-19 vaccination program, together with additional resources to assist with the establishment and operations of COVID-19 vaccination sites.

The department has consulted with key stakeholders on the need to undertake emergency authorisation of a time-limited surge workforce to support the delivery of the COVID-19 vaccination program in Victoria. More information about the results of this consultation will follow soon.

For assistance with workforce surge requirements, contact [COVIDstaffing@dhhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:COVIDstaffing@dhhs.vic.gov.au)

## Emergency authorised workforce

The 'emergency authorised workforce' (staff who do not usually deliver immunisations) refers to newly authorised workforce – who are not currently authorised immunisers and not frequently providing vaccines – including:

- registered nurses and enrolled nurses
- midwives
- Aboriginal health practitioners
- pharmacists
- paramedics.

The department has partnered with [Torrens Health](https://www.torrenshealth.com.au) <<https://www.torrenshealth.com.au>> to assist with workforce surge requirements.

Any additional authorised surge workforce for COVID-19 vaccines will require additional training to assist with the rollout. This newly authorised workforce will help support existing services to provide the COVID-19 vaccine to every eligible Victorian who wishes to be vaccinated.

## Training for COVID-19 vaccine providers

All COVID-19 vaccine providers, including existing authorised immunisers, will need to undertake training specific to the COVID-19 vaccines.

**All existing authorised immunisers who routinely administer vaccines** will only need to complete the Australian Government's training package:

[National COVID-19 Vaccination Training Program](https://covid19vaccinationtraining.org.au/login/index.php) <<https://covid19vaccinationtraining.org.au/login/index.php>>.

Existing authorised immunisers (staff currently delivering immunisations) include:

- medical practitioners
- nurse practitioners
- nurse immunisers
- pharmacist immunisers.

**Additional training is required for emergency authorised workforce – those who are not frequently providing vaccines.** The newly authorised workforce will need to complete both of the following:

- [Victorian COVID-19 e-Learning Competency training package and practical immuniser simulation](https://education-mvec.mcri.edu.au) <<https://education-mvec.mcri.edu.au>>
- [National COVID-19 Vaccination Training Program](https://covid19vaccinationtraining.org.au/login/index.php) <<https://covid19vaccinationtraining.org.au/login/index.php>>.

It is recommended that non-clinical staff (such as administrative staff or people involved in the receipt and handling of the vaccine) complete the three non-clinical modules of the [National COVID-19 Vaccination Training Program](https://covid19vaccinationtraining.org.au/login/index.php) <<https://covid19vaccinationtraining.org.au/login/index.php>>.

**Summary of training requirements for each workforce**

<b>Workforce</b>	<b>Required training</b>	<b>Skills and capabilities demonstration</b>
<b>Authorised immunisation provider</b> (staff currently delivering immunisations): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Medical practitioners</li> <li>• Nurse practitioners</li> <li>• Nurse immunisers</li> <li>• Pharmacist immunisers</li> </ul>	Must complete the <a href="https://covid19vaccinationtraining.org.au">National COVID-19 Vaccination Training Program</a> < <a href="https://covid19vaccinationtraining.org.au">https://covid19vaccinationtraining.org.au</a> >: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core modules (six modules)</li> <li>• Additional modules specific to individual vaccines</li> <li>• COVID-19 Vaccine Management System (CVMS) training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Relevant in-system modules</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Health services must ensure staff meet clinical competencies. All COVID-19 vaccine providers must demonstrate skills in: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpersonal skills (including consent and communication)</li> <li>• Preparation and handling (including multi-dose vial handling)</li> <li>• Adverse events following immunisation (AEFI) procedures</li> </ul>
<b>Emergency authorised workforce</b> (staff who do not usually deliver immunisations): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aboriginal health practitioners</li> <li>• Pharmacists</li> <li>• Pharmacy technicians</li> <li>• Registered nurses</li> <li>• Midwives</li> <li>• Paramedics</li> </ul>	Must complete <b>in order</b> : <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="https://education-mvec.mcri.edu.au">Victorian COVID-19 e-Learning Competency</a> &lt;<a href="https://education-mvec.mcri.edu.au">https://education-mvec.mcri.edu.au</a>&gt;: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Online eLearning (three modules)</li> <li>• Local or Victorian practical new immuniser simulation</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. <a href="https://covid19vaccinationtraining.org.au">National COVID-19 Vaccination Training Program</a> &lt;<a href="https://covid19vaccinationtraining.org.au">https://covid19vaccinationtraining.org.au</a>&gt;: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core modules (six modules)</li> <li>• Additional modules specific to individual vaccines</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. <b>CVMS Training</b> Relevant in-system modules</li> </ol>	<b>Note: Emergency authorised workforce (who are to administer vaccines) must complete a minimum of five supervised vaccination procedures</b> Health services must ensure staff abide by occupational health and safety requirements and fulfill reporting requirements (through CVMS)
<b>Supporting administrative, logistics and non-clinical workforce</b>	Recommended to complete the <a href="https://covid19vaccinationtraining.org.au">National COVID-19 Vaccination Training Program</a> < <a href="https://covid19vaccinationtraining.org.au">https://covid19vaccinationtraining.org.au</a> >: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Core modules (three non-clinical modules)</li> <li>• CVMS Training <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Relevant in-system modules</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Health services must ensure staff abide by occupational health and safety requirements and fulfill reporting requirements (through CVMS)

## Safety of the vaccines

- As part of Australia's stringent regulatory assessment process for new medicines and vaccines, the TGA considers information about possible side effects. For a vaccine to be registered for use in Australia, the benefits must outweigh the risks.
- The TGA continues to monitor vaccines after registration and distribution so that the Australian health system can detect and respond to any safety concerns. Australia has a strong and well-established safety monitoring system for vaccines. Reports of suspected side effects from health professionals and consumers are an essential element of this safety monitoring.
- ATAGI has released [clinical advice for health care providers on the use of COVID-19 vaccines in Australia](https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/02/covid-19-vaccination-atagi-clinical-guidance-on-covid-19-vaccine-in-australia-in-2021.pdf) <<https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/02/covid-19-vaccination-atagi-clinical-guidance-on-covid-19-vaccine-in-australia-in-2021.pdf>>.
- Information regarding [COVID-19 vaccination for pregnant and breastfeeding women](https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/02/covid-19-vaccination-covid-19-vaccination-decision-guide-for-women-who-are-pregnant-breastfeeding-or-planning-pregnancy-covid-19-vaccination-decision-guide-for-women-who-are-pregnant-breastfeeding-or-planning-pregnancy_0.pdf) <[https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/02/covid-19-vaccination-covid-19-vaccination-decision-guide-for-women-who-are-pregnant-breastfeeding-or-planning-pregnancy-covid-19-vaccination-decision-guide-for-women-who-are-pregnant-breastfeeding-or-planning-pregnancy\\_0.pdf](https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2021/02/covid-19-vaccination-covid-19-vaccination-decision-guide-for-women-who-are-pregnant-breastfeeding-or-planning-pregnancy-covid-19-vaccination-decision-guide-for-women-who-are-pregnant-breastfeeding-or-planning-pregnancy_0.pdf)> has also been released.
- More information about how COVID-19 vaccine safety will be monitored, what to do if you think a patient is experiencing a side effect, and how to report adverse events is available on the [TGA website](https://www.tga.gov.au) <<https://www.tga.gov.au>>.
- Adverse event reporting will occur through existing Victorian reporting processes. For more information, visit [immunisation reporting](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation/adverse-events-following-immunisation-reporting) <<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation/adverse-events-following-immunisation-reporting>>.
- A hotline will also be available for clinicians reporting adverse events, and further specialist capacity is being created for rapid referral and follow up of patients who may have had a significant adverse event.
- Read the TGA statement on the findings of its [Norwegian investigation into COVID-19 vaccine risks for elderly people](https://www.tga.gov.au/media-release/investigation-reveals-no-specific-risk-covid-19-vaccinations-elderly-patients) <<https://www.tga.gov.au/media-release/investigation-reveals-no-specific-risk-covid-19-vaccinations-elderly-patients>>.
- More information specific to COVID-19 vaccines regarding AEFI procedures, and any contraindications to vaccination, will follow as more information becomes available.

## Influenza and COVID-19 vaccines

Routine co-administration of an influenza vaccine with a COVID-19 vaccine on the same day is not recommended. This recommendation from ATAGI is based on the lack of direct safety and efficacy data regarding co-administration.

[ATAGI's interim advice](https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/atagi-advice-on-influenza-and-covid-19-vaccines) <<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/atagi-advice-on-influenza-and-covid-19-vaccines>> is to space COVID-19 and influenza vaccination by at least 14 days. This is a precautionary approach, and this recommendation may change to permit closer spacing or co-administration as further information becomes available.

The department is expecting confirmation of volumes and dates for delivery of influenza vaccines to be provided by the Australian Government in the coming weeks.

## More information and resources

### Australia

- Australian Department of Health COVID-19 information: [health.gov.au/covid19-vaccines](https://health.gov.au/covid19-vaccines)

- Australian COVID-19 vaccines campaign and communications materials (including videos, social media content and posters): [health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/coronavirus-covid-19-vaccines-campaign-materials](https://health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/coronavirus-covid-19-vaccines-campaign-materials)
- Australian Government resources for COVID-19 vaccine providers: [health.gov.au/resources/collections/covid-19-vaccination-advice-for-covid-19-vaccine-providers](https://health.gov.au/resources/collections/covid-19-vaccination-advice-for-covid-19-vaccine-providers)
- TGA media release on the approval of the Pfizer vaccine: [tga.gov.au/covid-19-vaccine-pfizer-australia-comirnaty-bnt162b2-mrna](https://tga.gov.au/covid-19-vaccine-pfizer-australia-comirnaty-bnt162b2-mrna)
- TGA media release on the start of a Norwegian investigation into COVID-19 vaccine risks for elderly people: [tga.gov.au/media-release/norwegian-investigation-covid-19-vaccination-risks-elderly-very-frail-patients](https://tga.gov.au/media-release/norwegian-investigation-covid-19-vaccination-risks-elderly-very-frail-patients)
- TGA media release on the conclusion of the Norwegian investigation into COVID-19 vaccine risks for elderly people: [tga.gov.au/media-release/investigation-reveals-no-specific-risk-covid-19-vaccinations-elderly-patients](https://tga.gov.au/media-release/investigation-reveals-no-specific-risk-covid-19-vaccinations-elderly-patients)
- Australian Department of Health media release on the approval of the Pfizer vaccine: [health.gov.au/news/tga-provisionally-approves-pfizerbiontech-covid-19-vaccine-for-use-in-australia](https://health.gov.au/news/tga-provisionally-approves-pfizerbiontech-covid-19-vaccine-for-use-in-australia)
- Australian Department of Health media release on the COVID-19 vaccine aged care stakeholder kit: [health.gov.au/resources/collections/covid-19-vaccine-aged-care-stakeholder-kit](https://health.gov.au/resources/collections/covid-19-vaccine-aged-care-stakeholder-kit)

## Victoria

- Victorian Department of Health COVID-19 vaccine information: [coronavirus.vic.gov.au/vaccine](https://coronavirus.vic.gov.au/vaccine)
- Victorian Department of Health COVID-19 vaccine research hub: [coronavirus.vic.gov.au/research-hub-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccine](https://coronavirus.vic.gov.au/research-hub-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccine)
- Victorian Department of Health COVID-19 vaccine information for healthcare workers: [coronavirus.vic.gov.au/information-health-care-workers-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccine](https://coronavirus.vic.gov.au/information-health-care-workers-coronavirus-covid-19-vaccine)
- Adverse events following immunisation reporting in Victoria: [health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation/adverse-events-following-immunisation-reporting](https://health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation/adverse-events-following-immunisation-reporting)
- General immunisation information on the Victorian Better Health Channel: [betterhealth.vic.gov.au/healthyliving/immunisation](https://betterhealth.vic.gov.au/healthyliving/immunisation)
- Vaccine safety information in different languages via the World Health Organization: [who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/vaccines-and-immunization-vaccine-safety](https://who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/vaccines-and-immunization-vaccine-safety)

## Contact us

For more information on the rollout of the COVID-19 vaccine in Victoria, contact the Victorian Department of Health COVID-19 Vaccination Preparedness Unit by emailing [COVIDvaccination@dhhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:COVIDvaccination@dhhs.vic.gov.au)

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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