



COVID-19 VACCINATION

Phase 1B General Practice Vaccine Rollout

Update – 22 April, 2021

A Primary Care Provider Bulletin has been sent to all COVID-19 vaccine providers, and is also provided to GP Peaks and PHNs for visibility. These Bulletins update providers on new information as needed.

Recalibration of COVID-19 Vaccination Program

The National Cabinet met on 19 and 22 April 2021 to discuss the recalibration of the COVID-19 Vaccination Program. National Cabinet has agreed to a series of changes to the Australian COVID-19 Vaccination Strategy. These changes include:

- **bringing forward the commencement of vaccinations for Australians 50 years and older** (currently under Phase 2a) to 3 May 2021 for State, Territory and Commonwealth Vaccination Clinics, and **17 May 2021 (or earlier where supply is available) for general practice**;
- limiting use of AstraZeneca vaccines to people 50 years and over;
- providing additional AstraZeneca doses to Primary Care sites;
- limiting the use of Pfizer vaccine to Australians under 50 years (with a few exceptions) until general availability later in the year as supply increases;
 - this includes Aged Care workers, Disability Care Workers and residents, critical and high risk workers, healthcare workers, and people with underlying medical condition.
- a progressive **geographical expansion of State/Territory Pfizer Clinics** to ensure distribution to those eligible Phase 1a and 1b under 50s; and
- expanding the number of Commonwealth and state and territory-operated Pfizer vaccination sites as supplies increase.

National Cabinet reinforced that general practice (including Commonwealth Vaccination Clinics and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Services) **will continue to be the primary model of delivery for people 50 years and older.**

If a general practice wishes **to bring forward the commencement of vaccinations for Australians 50 years and older** they should advise their PHN. It's critical that the Phase 1 cohort are given priority to any bookings available.

The Department is **currently reviewing the site-level allocations of AstraZeneca** to primary care providers and further advice will be provided as soon as possible on any changes to site dose allocations.

More information on these changes can be found at <https://www.health.gov.au/news/covid-19-vaccination-program-national-cabinet-update-on-22-april-2021>

Billing of MBS COVID-19 Vaccination numbers by non-participating practices

We would like your help to communicate to all practices that **all MBS COVID-19 Vaccine numbers, including the Suitability Assessment Service numbers, can only be accessed by those practices participating in the Government's COVID-19 vaccination rollout.**

General practices that are not participating in Governments COVID-19 vaccination delivery program cannot bill to MBS COVID-19 vaccination numbers. This includes consultations that involve discussing a COVID-19 vaccine (e.g. discussing individual suitability or risk/benefit).

Further information can be found on the [MBS item notes page](#) on the Department of Health website.

Testing for immunity after vaccination

Public health authorities have reported that they have been receiving results of COVID-19 serology for vaccinated patients that have been ordered by general practitioners.

Please remind your colleagues that testing for serological markers of immunity (anti-spike antibodies or neutralising antibodies) to COVID-19 is **not** recommended. An immune correlate of protection has not yet been established for SARS-CoV-2 infection in humans. Therefore, serology is not useful in determining whether a vaccinated individual is protected against COVID-19.

Updated advice on vaccine administration

The below information provides a summary of recent clinical updates and clarifications that address specific questions that providers have raised.

Clinical updates and considerations can be found on the [clinical considerations page](#) on the Department of Health website.

Interruption to COVID-19 vaccination and advice for re-vaccination

- If the process of administering a vaccine intramuscularly is interrupted (such as by syringe–needle disconnection) and most of the dose has not been given, repeat the whole dose as soon as practicable. If most of the dose has been given, repeat dosing is not required. If there is uncertainty, it is acceptable to administer a repeat whole dose.

Timing for administration of the second dose of COVID-19 vaccine when COVID-19 is contracted between the first and second dose

Where an individual contracts COVID-19 between the first and second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, in general the following is recommended:

- The second dose of Pfizer vaccine should be given a minimum of 8 weeks after the individual has recovered from their acute illness
- The second dose of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine should be given a minimum of 12 weeks after the individual has recovered from their acute illness

Where an individual is very likely to be in contact with cases of COVID-19 (e.g. an individual working in quarantine), consideration may be given to shortening the above recommended intervals. In this instance, clinicians may wish to seek advice from a specialist immunisation service.

Updated links

Risk-benefit of receiving AstraZeneca

Information about the AstraZeneca vaccine to help patients make informed decisions.

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/weighing-up-the-potential-benefits-against-risk-of-harm-from-covid-19-vaccine-astrazeneca>

ATAGI Advice

ATAGI have reinforced their recommendations on the use of the COVID-19 vaccine.

<https://health.gov.au/news/atagi-reinforce-recommendations-on-use-of-covid-19-vaccines-following-review-of-vaccine-safety-data-and-benefits>

The Chief Medical Officer has also issued a statement on the ATAGI advice

<https://health.gov.au/news/response-latest-atagi-advice>

The TGA have published the outcomes of investigations into three potential TTS cases

<https://www.tga.gov.au/alert/astrazeneca-chadox1-s-covid-19-vaccine-3>

In response to the ATAGI statement the Department of Health has updated these pages on the website:

<https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/information-for-covid-19-vaccination-providers/covid-19-vaccine-advice-for-vaccine-providers>

<https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/learn-about-covid-19-vaccines/about-the-astrazeneca-covid-19-vaccine>

<https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/information-for-covid-19-vaccination-providers/covid-19-vaccine-information-for-disability-service-providers>

<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>