



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: Covid-19 Vaccinations

Why should my child get vaccinated against COVID-19?

Children who are vaccinated will receive protection against COVID-19. The paediatric Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine has been demonstrated to reduce COVID-19 in children 5-11 years of ageⁱ.

While children and young people are less likely than adults to get severe symptoms if they contract COVID-19, some can still become very unwell with COVID-19. Some children have a higher risk of becoming seriously unwell or needing to be admitted to hospital – this includes children with certain pre-existing conditions, such as chronic lung disease, congenital heart disease, neurological conditions, obesity or immunocompromiseⁱⁱ.

Some children and adolescents can also develop long term symptoms that are still present for some months after their COVID-19 infection. This is called Long COVID.

When children are vaccinated, the risk that they will become infected and spread COVID-19 to family members, friends and others around them is reduced.

Vaccinating younger children also means there is less chance of disruption to school. This will help children enjoy more face-to-face learning, play time, engaging in different activities, and being with their friends.

How do we know that the vaccine is safe for 5 to 11 year old's?

All COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in Australia are safe and effective across approved age groups.

Scientists and medical experts assess vaccine research, findings from clinical trials and real-world evidence to help them decide whether a vaccine is safe for use and effective against infection.

They also regularly review new research and evidence to ensure approved vaccines continue to be safe and effective. ATAGI regularly reviews new research and evidence, and provides recommendations on vaccination to Government.

If you have questions about vaccine safety or side effects, you can speak with your child's doctor or health professional.

After their vaccination, children are monitored for at least 15 minutes to make sure they are okay. Children with a history of anaphylaxis will be monitored for 30 minutes. You must mention any anaphylaxis to the nurse when you attend for your vaccine, to ensure the vaccine is a safe option.

If my child or I have had COVID-19, should they get vaccinated?

Yes. Anyone who has had COVID-19 is able and strongly encouraged to get a COVID-19 vaccine.

COVID-19 vaccines are recommended for people who've had COVID-19. If you or your child has had COVID-19 in the last 3 months, it is usually recommended that you wait until 3 months after your infection for the next due dose.

A longer gap between infection and vaccination is likely to lead to a better immune response and result in longer protection from reinfection.

You may be vaccinated earlier than the recommended 3-month interval if you:

- are significantly immunocompromised and may be at greater risk of getting COVID-19 again
- starting an immunosuppressant
- have a job that requires you to be vaccinated
- have a job that puts you at greater risk of being exposed to COVID-19
- are about to travel overseas
- you cannot reschedule vaccination easily

You should not be vaccinated until you've recovered from the acute illness. People with a past COVID-19 infection should receive all available doses of the COVID-19 vaccine including booster doses.

People with prolonged symptoms from COVID-19 beyond 3 months should be vaccinated on a case-by-case basis and should speak to their healthcare provider.

While a COVID-19 infection may provide some natural immunity, it will decrease over time. By getting vaccinated, you will receive maximum protection against further COVID-19 infection.

Is the vaccine dose for children aged 5 to 11 the same as for people aged 12 and over?

No, the dose of the Pfizer vaccine given to children aged 5-11 years is a smaller dose, it is one third of the dose given to those aged 12 and over. This is because children have been found to make an immune response after 2 doses that is equally as strong as the larger doses in people aged over 12.

My child will be turning 12 soon – should I wait for them to turn 12 and then have them get the dose for people 12 years and older?

Your child is best to get their first vaccine as soon as they are eligible, which is now. If they turn 12 years of age after receiving their first dose as part of the 5-to-11-year-old schedule, their second dose will be the higher dose for people 12 years and older.

How many doses will children aged 5 to 11 need?

The recommended schedule for vaccination in this age group is 2 doses, 8 weeks apart. This can be shortened to 3 weeks in special circumstances, such as:

- part of an outbreak response
- before the start of significant immunosuppression
- before international travel.

Booster doses may be recommended in the future.

Can I catch COVID-19 again?

While your risk of catching COVID-19 again after recovering is lower, reinfection is still possible. The level of protection you have can also depend on factors like your age and immunosuppression.

Vaccination is the best way to protect yourself against reinfection. It's also important to keep up measures like hand washing, wearing a mask and physical distancing.

Where can I get my next dose from?

There are GP clinics and pharmacies who are administering Covid-19 vaccines in the local area.

By searching your post code on the Vaccine Clinic Finder website, together with your preferred choice of vaccine, eg Pfizer, they will display the different locations where you'll be able to receive your next dose.

Vaccine Clinic Finder- <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/apps-and-tools/covid-19-vaccine-clinic-finder>

A family-friendly vaccination centre at: <https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/book-your-vaccine-appointment> or by calling the Coronavirus Hotline on 1800 675 398.

Eligibility

Anyone aged from 5 years old are recommended to have 2 primary doses given 8 weeks apart.

If you are aged 16 or over, you should get a third dose of vaccine 3 months after your second dose to help keep you protected against COVID-19.

(ATAGI) has approved a winter dose (2nd booster) of COVID-19 vaccine for eligible priority groupsⁱⁱⁱ.

- adults aged 65 years and older
- residents of aged care or disability care facilities
- people aged 16 years and older who are severely immunocompromised
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 50 years and older.

Eligible people can receive their winter dose 4 months after receiving their 3rd dose, or from 4 months after having COVID-19 if infection has occurred since the person's 3rd dose (or 4th dose for people who received a 3-dose primary course).

People aged 5 and over who have had COVID-19 and are due for their next dose of COVID-19 vaccine should wait 3 months from testing positive before getting their next vaccine dose^{iv}.

ⁱ <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2022/02/atagi-recommendations-on-pfizer-covid-19-vaccine-use-in-children-aged-5-to-11-years.pdf>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/2022/04/covid-19-vaccination-pfizer-information-and-consent-form-for-parents-and-guardians-of-children-aged-5-to-11-years.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.health.gov.au/news/atagi-statement-on-recommendations-on-a-winter-booster-dose-of-covid-19-vaccine>

^{iv} <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/advice-for-providers/clinical-guidance/additional-considerations#vaccination-after-testing-positive-for-covid19>