



Dear Parents and Carers

This week's return to face-to-face learning has been a fantastic milestone for children, families, and schools, across Victoria.

The Department of Education and Training has worked closely with the Department of Health to ensure our schools are as safe as they can be.

This includes improving classroom ventilation with air-purifiers and supporting vital COVIDSafe steps, including the use of regular rapid antigen testing, mask wearing and physical distancing.

Thank you to parents and carers for supporting your children with these steps – they are not always easy, but are essential to help keep our schools safe and open, and to avoid the disruptions of home learning.

Helping your child to get vaccinated is one of the most important steps we can all take to give children direct protection against COVID-19.

Thanks to the hard work of school communities and families, almost 97% of all 12- to 18-year-olds have now had their first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, and more than 93% are fully vaccinated.

This is a phenomenal rate of protection for our older students, who couldn't have done it without the support of their families. We now want to see as many of our primary school students achieve that same level of protection.

For those who haven't yet done so, you are invited to book your child's vaccination as soon as possible.

COVID-19 vaccines have been tested and shown to be safe and effective in protecting against serious illness and reducing the likelihood of COVID-19 spreading.

High rates of vaccination also mean there is less chance of school closures – meaning more time for face-to-face learning, more time for fun activities and more time for children to be with their friends.

### How it works

Vaccinations for children aged 5 to 11 are delivered at 2 appointments, 8 weeks apart.

The time between the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> dose can be shortened to 3 weeks for children at higher risk of severe COVID-19 such as children with underlying medical conditions.

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) has [advised](#) that this includes children with:

- Down syndrome
- Cerebral palsy
- Muscular Dystrophy

- Severe disability that requires frequent assistance with daily living, which includes some autistic children and children with rare genetic disorders
- Heart disease and chronic lung disease, including those regularly hospitalised for asthma
- Cancer and survivors of childhood cancer

### How to book an appointment

There are lots of convenient options to get your child vaccinated, including state-wide vaccination clinics, your local GP or pharmacy, and pop-up clinics at many local primary schools.

You can book your appointment in a few different ways, including:

- online: [coronavirus.vic.gov.au/vaccine](https://coronavirus.vic.gov.au/vaccine)
- by phone: [1800 675 398](tel:1800675398) (Coronavirus Hotline)
- In person: talk to your local pharmacy, doctor, or a [family-friendly vaccination centre](#)

### Need help?

Call the [Coronavirus Hotline](tel:1800675398) 1800 675 398: booking or vaccination questions

Need a translation? Refer to the [Information about COVID-19 vaccines in languages other than English](#)

### What to bring to the vaccine appointment

For information on what to bring to a vaccine appointment please visit the [Checklist: before your COVID-19 vaccination](#).

These resources can help you and your child prepare for the vaccination:

- [Needle phobia - The Melbourne Vaccine Education Centre \(MVEC\) \(mcri.edu.au\)](https://mcri.edu.au)
- [Tips to help a child afraid of needles and stop it becoming a phobia - ABC Everyday](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccination social scripts - Amaze - Autism resource](#)
- [Sesame Street ABC of COVID vaccines](#)
- [The Australian Technical Advisory Group advice on the safety of the paediatric Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine](#)
- The [Australian Technical Advisory Group 19 January update](#) for a table of medical conditions with increased risk.

### Extra support for children with disability or special requirements

Disability Liaison Officers and dedicated vaccination centres (pop-up clinics) are available to for parents and carers who need help for their child to get vaccinated.

For more information, refer to the [Vaccine information for people with a disability or special requirements](#).

Thank you again for your support in ensuring children and our schools are as safe as possible.

Yours sincerely

Stephen Fraser

Deputy Secretary

**School Education Programs and Support**

3 February 2022