

Current as of 13 September 2021

Frequently asked questions

ABOUT THE VACCINE

HOW DO THE COVID-19 VACCINES WORK?

COVID-19 vaccines prepare your body to defend itself against COVID-19 and train your immune system to recognise COVID-19. They have been designed to help you fight off COVID-19 before it makes you sick and to reduce the severity of your symptoms if you do get sick. Most vaccines work in this way and the goal is to prevent serious illness and death.

When a person is given the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, some of their cells will read the vaccine's mRNA instructions and temporarily produce the spike protein, which mimics the COVID-19 virus. The person's immune system recognises this protein as foreign and produces antibodies and activates T cells (white blood cells) to attack it.

When a person is given the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, some of their cells will be "infected" by a dead adenovirus (common cold) carrying the spike protein DNA, which mimics the COVID-19 virus. The immune system recognises this protein as foreign and produces antibodies and activates T cells (white blood cells) to attack it.

WILL THE VACCINES REDUCE THE SPREAD OF TRANSMISSION OF THE VIRUS?

During clinical trials of the COVID-19 vaccines, research focused on whether the vaccines helped produce enough antibodies to stop us from getting sick. The ones that did this safely and effectively have been approved for use.

Now that the vaccines are being rolled out worldwide, early research suggests they may also reduce how infectious we are if we do catch COVID-19, which could help stop or reduce the spread of the virus.

It is very important that we continue practising good hygiene and physical distancing, using the COVID SAfe Check-In, and getting tested and staying home if unwell.

WHAT'S IN THE COVID-19 VACCINES?

Vaccine ingredients vary depending on the use of the vaccine. Generally, vaccines may contain some of the following ingredients:

- > a protein component of a virus
- > a piece of genetic code (DNA or mRNA)
- > a very small dose of a weakened virus
- > a substance to boost the immune response (an adjuvant)
- > a small amount of preservative
- > sterile salt water (saline) for injections

Ingredients for the COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in Australia are listed in the [Australian Register of Therapeutic Goods](#).

DO THE VACCINES CONTAIN ANY ANIMAL PRODUCTS?

No, COVID-19 vaccines do not contain any animal products or egg.

DO THE COVID-19 VACCINES WORK ON NEW VARIANTS?

It is anticipated that the COVID-19 vaccines will be effective against newer strains of COVID-19.

Evidence suggests the COVID-19 vaccines remain effective in preventing symptomatic infection and severe disease caused by the Delta variant of COVID-19. The vaccines are more than 90% effective in preventing hospitalisation from the Delta strain. Two doses of either the COVID-19 vaccines are considered better against the Delta variant than one. However, one dose still provides partial protection against infection and severe disease.

ARE COVID-19 VACCINES FREE?

Yes. The first and second doses of the COVID-19 vaccines are free for all people living in Australia. If you are not eligible for Medicare, you can still get the COVID-19 vaccine for free at SA Health COVID-19 Vaccination Clinics and Respiratory Clinics.

WHY DOES EVERYONE NEED TO GET VACCINATED?

COVID-19 vaccinations reduce the community's risk of COVID-19 outbreaks and will help to reduce symptoms and side-effects of COVID-19 if you are exposed.

There's growing evidence that vaccinated people are less infectious if they do catch COVID-19, which means getting vaccinated is the best way you can protect yourself and your loved ones.

ELIGIBILITY

WHO CAN GET THE COVID-19 VACCINE?

The COVID-19 vaccine is available to anyone aged 12 and over. You can find a clinic near you by visiting our [vaccination clinics and sites page](#).

I'M FIT AND HEALTHY – DO I STILL NEED TO GET VACCINATED?

COVID-19 can cause very serious disease, long term health issues, and death. COVID-19 can be a serious illness for anyone who gets it, including people who are young, fit and otherwise healthy.

There's growing evidence that vaccinated people are less infectious if they do catch COVID-19, which means getting vaccinated is the best way you can protect yourself and your loved ones.

CAN I STILL GET A COVID-19 VACCINE IF I DON'T HAVE A MEDICARE CARD?

If you are not eligible for Medicare, you can get the COVID-19 vaccine for free at an SA Health COVID-19 Vaccination Clinic or a Respiratory Clinic.

CAN I HAVE THE VACCINE IF I AM IMMUNOCOMPROMISED?

Immunocompromised people are being prioritised to receive a COVID-19 vaccine, as they are at increased risk of severe outcomes with COVID-19.

None of the COVID-19 vaccines that have been approved, or are currently being considered for approval, in Australia contain the live COVID-19 virus, which means they are safe for immunocompromised people.

If you are immunocompromised, you should follow the advice of your doctor, including considering when to get the vaccine amongst any other treatments or medications.

IS IT SAFE TO RECEIVE THE COVID-19 VACCINE IF I'M UNDERGOING CANCER TREATMENT?

Everyone currently receiving chemotherapy, immunotherapy, CAR-T-cell therapies, hormonal therapies or stem cell transplants can still receive the vaccine. However, talk to your treating doctor about timing your vaccine with your other treatments.

People with active cancer or who are undergoing cancer treatments are at higher risk of severe COVID-19 infection and death compared to the general population. People with active blood cancers are at especially high risk.

Read [more information](#) on getting vaccinated against COVID-19 while you have cancer.

MY CHILD IS 12 TO 15, CAN THEY BE VACCINATED?

People aged 12 to 15 are eligible to get vaccinated at SA Health COVID-19 vaccination clinics.

MY CHILD IS 12 TO 15 AND HAS AN UNDERLYING MEDICAL CONDITION OR DISABILITY, CAN THEY BE VACCINATED?

If your child is aged 12 to 15 and has an underlying medical condition or disability, you should discuss their vaccination with their treating doctor or specialist. Your doctor or specialist may decide your child requires further review or they may need an appointment at the Paediatric COVID-19 Specialist Immunisation Service at the Women's and Children's Hospital.

If this is the case, your doctor will need to complete a referral form and you will be contacted directly by the Women's and Children's vaccination clinic for an appointment.

Speak to your child's treating doctor or specialist if they are on National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and/or living with disability requiring frequent assistance with activities of daily living, including down syndrome, muscular dystrophy, traumatic brain and spinal cord injury, and severe intellectual disability, or have any of the following underlying medical conditions:

- > Children with complex chronic disease
- > Cancers and haematological diseases (currently or in the past)
- > Transplant recipients
- > Chronic inflammatory conditions
- > Immunodeficiency conditions
- > Chronic kidney, liver, lung or neurological conditions or diabetes
- > Severe obesity
- > Heart disease and blood pressure disorders
- > Severe mental health conditions
- > Pregnant people.

A [comprehensive list of eligible conditions](#) is available online.

CAN I GET THE COVID-19 VACCINE IF I AM PLANNING A PREGNANCY, CURRENTLY PREGNANT OR BREASTFEEDING?

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) and Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) recommend pregnant women are offered mRNA COVID-19 vaccines, such as Pfizer and Moderna, at any stage of pregnancy. This is due to the risk increased risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19 to those who are pregnant and their baby.

Global surveillance data from large numbers of pregnant women have not identified any significant safety concerns with mRNA COVID-19 vaccines given at any stage of pregnancy. There is also evidence of antibodies in cord blood and breast milk, which may offer protection to infants through passive immunity.

If you are pregnant, you should discuss vaccination with your health professional.

If you are planning a pregnancy, you can safely receive an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine, such as Pfizer or Moderna. You do not need to avoid becoming pregnant before or after vaccination. You are not required to have a pregnancy test before getting vaccinated.

If you are breastfeeding, you can receive an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine at any time. You do not need to stop breastfeeding before or after vaccination.

For more information, visit the [COVID-19 vaccination and pregnancy, planning a family, and breastfeeding page](#) and read the [Australian Government's COVID-19 vaccination decision guide for women who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or planning pregnancy](#).

I HAVE HAD ONE DOSE OF THE ASTRAZENECA COVID-19 VACCINE AND AM NOW PREGNANT, CAN I RECEIVE THE PFIZER COVID-19 VACCINE?

If you received a first dose of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine and then become pregnant, you can receive the Pfizer (mRNA) COVID-19 vaccine for your second dose.

mRNA COVID-19 vaccines, such as Pfizer, are the preferred vaccine for pregnancy.

The recommended interval between the first dose of AstraZeneca and second dose of Pfizer is 4 to 12 weeks.

While it is generally recommended that the same vaccine is used for both doses, the reason for a preference for Pfizer during pregnancy is due to more information regarding safety of Pfizer for pregnant people compared with AstraZeneca.

You and your provider may wish to consider the following factors:

- > There is a growing body of evidence supporting the safety of mRNA COVID-19 vaccines in pregnancy.
- > There is still very limited data on the safety of viral vector vaccines (such as the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine) in pregnancy.
- > There is comparatively less data on the safety and efficacy of mixed vaccine schedules than completing the series with the same vaccine.

I AM 60 AND OVER AND I HAVE HAD ONE DOSE OF THE ASTRAZENECA COVID-19 VACCINE, CAN I GET THE PFIZER COVID-19 VACCINE?

If you have already had your first dose of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, you must receive AstraZeneca for your second dose. The vaccines are not interchangeable and it is important to have two doses for the best possible protection.

VACCINATION APPOINTMENT

DO I GET TO CHOOSE WHAT TYPE OF VACCINE I HAVE?

The Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine is available for people aged 12 and over.

The AstraZeneca vaccine is available for people aged 18 and over. People aged 18 to 59 years you will need to make an informed decision by speaking with the vaccination provider at their appointment.

SHOULD I AVOID BEING VACCINATED IF I FEEL UNWELL?

If you are unwell with symptoms of COVID-19, including fever or chills, cough, sore throat, runny nose, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell, or diarrhoea and vomiting, you should get tested for COVID-19 and isolate until you receive your results.

If you have received a negative COVID-19 test result and only have a mild fever, you can still be vaccinated. If you have a high fever, you should delay your vaccination until you are well.

If you've tested positive to COVID-19, or are a close contact of someone with COVID-19, remain in quarantine and do not attend your vaccine appointment.

WHO WILL ADMINISTER MY VACCINE?

You could get your COVID-19 vaccine from a doctor, nurse, pharmacist or other healthcare worker.

The person vaccinating you has completed COVID-19 vaccination training to ensure they can safely manage and administer COVID-19 vaccines.

The training is available for:

- > health professionals in hospitals
- > general practices
- > State and Commonwealth vaccination clinics
- > Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations
- > pharmacies

CAN I RECEIVE A COVID-19 VACCINE AT A PHARMACY?

Participating community pharmacies across South Australia can offer the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine to eligible people.

To find a participating pharmacy, visit covid-vaccine.healthdirect.gov.au/eligibility.

WHAT DO I NEED FOR MY COVID-19 VACCINATION APPOINTMENT?

If you have a Medicare card, you will need to bring your card to your appointment. If you do not have a Medicare card, bring a form of photo ID.

It's important to make sure your details are up to date with Medicare. You can do this through your online account on MyGov, on the Express Medicare Plus App, or you can call Medicare on 132 011.

You may also need to bring proof of eligibility (e.g. work ID or a letter from your employer).

HOW LONG WILL MY APPOINTMENT TAKE?

The length of appointment will depend on your individual personal and health circumstances. If based on your personal circumstances, you know that you may need longer please account for this in your planning. Most people will need to allow at least 30 minutes for their appointment.

CAN I BRING SOMEONE TO MY VACCINATION APPOINTMENT WITH ME?

Children aged under 16 need to be accompanied by a parent or guardian.

People aged 16 and over can also have someone attend their vaccination appointment for support. This can be a support worker, family member, carer or friend.

CAN I WITHDRAW CONSENT ON THE DAY OF THE VACCINE?

Yes, receiving the COVID-19 vaccine is voluntary and consent can be withdrawn at any time prior to receiving the first or second dose of the vaccine.

WILL I GET A RECORD OF MY VACCINATION?

If you receive your COVID-19 vaccination in South Australia, you will be given an official hard copy record of your vaccination. It is important you keep this as it contains medical information.

Your vaccination information will be recorded on the Australian Immunisation Register. Australians can access their immunisation history statement through Medicare for proof of vaccination, both digitally and in hard copy.

If you're aged 14 and over, you will need to get your own immunisation history statement or digital certificate using either your Medicare online account through myGov or the Express Plus Medicare mobile app.

If you don't have a Medicare card, you can request an Individual Healthcare Identifier (IHI) from the Australian Government to get an immunisation summary through My Health Record that will provide proof of vaccination.

WHAT ARE THE SIDE EFFECTS OF COVID-19 VACCINES?

Vaccines, like any other medication or natural therapy, can cause reactions or side effects. The extent and severity of side effects from the COVID-19 vaccines are similar to those from other vaccines. As part of regulatory assessment of all vaccines, the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) considers possible side effects. The benefits must outweigh the risks for a vaccine to be registered for use in Australia.

You may experience minor reactions or side effects following vaccination. Most reactions or side effects last no more than a couple of days and do not require special treatment. Serious reactions like allergic reactions are extremely rare.

Common reactions to the COVID-19 vaccines include:

- > tenderness, pain and swelling at the injection site
- > tiredness
- > headache
- > muscle and joint pain
- > chills
- > fever

Some people may also experience redness or itching at the injection site, nausea, pain in the limb, enlarged lymph nodes, difficulty sleeping or generally feeling unwell.

Reactions or side effects, such as fever and tiredness, from vaccines are often a sign that your immune system has been activated and is learning how to fight the disease you've been vaccinated against. You can use the [COVID-19 Vaccine Side Effect Checker](#) if you have concerns after having either of the COVID-19 vaccines.

An extremely rare blood clotting syndrome, Thrombosis with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (TTS), has been linked to the AstraZeneca vaccine.

Very rare and generally mild cases of myocarditis and pericarditis have been observed following vaccination with the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. See the [Therapeutic Goods Administration \(TGA\) statement](#).

Myocarditis is inflammation of the heart muscle while pericarditis is inflammation of the lining around the heart. There are many potential causes of myocarditis and pericarditis, including as a complication in people who are infected with COVID-19 or some other viruses.

The benefits of protection against COVID-19 far outweigh the risks from rare and generally mild side effects. Effects on the heart from COVID-19 infection are much more common and usually more severe than with rare effects from vaccination. The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) reaffirms that the benefits of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine outweigh these rare risks.

As with all COVID-19 vaccines, the TGA will continue to monitor the safety of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine and update recommendations as needed.

If you have any concerns, speak with your GP.

WHAT IF I FEEL UNWELL AFTER MY VACCINE?

As with any medication, very rarely a severe allergic reaction may occur. If it does, it will generally occur within 15 minutes of the vaccination.

The Australian Immunisation Handbook, developed by the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI), provides clinical guidelines for healthcare professionals about using vaccines safely and effectively.

It recommends that:

- > all vaccine recipients be observed for at least 15 minutes after they have been vaccinated to ensure they do not experience an immediate adverse event and to provide rapid medical care if needed.
- > people with a history of anaphylaxis to non-vaccine antigens (e.g. food, insect stings, medicines) should be observed for 30 minutes following administration of a COVID-19 vaccine dose.

You can use the [COVID-19 Vaccine Side Effect Checker](#) if you have concerns about any symptoms after having either of the COVID-19 vaccines. The COVID-19 vaccine side effects symptom checker is not a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. Always consult a medical professional for serious symptoms or emergencies.

See your doctor or healthcare professional as soon as possible or go directly to a hospital if:

- > you have a reaction that you consider severe or unexpected
- > you are concerned about your condition after vaccination.
- > you experience any side effects associated with TTS.

Seek medical attention immediately if you experience any of the following symptoms:

- > shortness of breath
- > chest pain
- > swelling in your leg
- > persistent abdominal (belly) pain
- > neurological symptoms, including severe and persistent headaches or blurred vision
- > tiny blood spots under the skin beyond the site of injection.

Reporting reactions and side effects is an essential part of ongoing vaccine safety monitoring. If you experience side effects from the vaccine, you can let your vaccine provider know and they can report them on your behalf.

If you have any general questions or concerns, you can also call the SA COVID-19 Information Line on 1800 253 787 from 9am to 5pm, 7 days a week.

SECOND DOSE

WHAT IS THE TIMING BETWEEN THE TWO VACCINATIONS?

When you get your first dose of the vaccine, you will be asked to make an appointment for your second dose.

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) and the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) recommend the following interval between COVID-19 vaccine doses:

- > [AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine](#) – 8 to 12 weeks (4 weeks at a minimum)*
- > [Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine](#) – 21 days**

If the time between doses exceeds the above recommendations, the second dose should be administered as soon as possible.

*The AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine is most effective when there is an 8 to 12 week interval between doses. SA Health vaccination clinics will offer second dose appointments between 8 and 12 weeks after the first dose.

**The second dose of Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine should not be administered earlier than 21 days and should be given within 42 days. The vaccine can be given safely after 42 days, however the long term immunity provided may be less.

Discuss the timing between your COVID-19 vaccines with your GP if you are concerned.

DO I HAVE TO GET MY SECOND DOSE AT THE SAME PLACE I GOT MY FIRST DOSE?

You should try to have your second dose at the same location to your first dose. However, it is more important you have the same type of vaccine and you receive your second dose the recommended length of time after your first dose.

We recommend bringing a hard copy of your vaccination record as proof that you've had your first dose administered.

CAN I GET A DIFFERENT VACCINE FOR THE SECOND DOSE?

As per clinical guidance from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) the Pfizer and AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccines are not considered interchangeable.

The two-dose course should be completed with the same vaccine, except for in the following cases:

- > After a serious adverse reaction to a vaccine.
- > If a first dose of a vaccine has been received overseas that is not available in Australia.
- > If someone has a precautionary condition (e.g. Cerebral venous sinus thrombosis) or contraindications (e.g. Thrombosis with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (TTS) from first dose) for AstraZeneca.

If you've had your first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine without developing TTS or experiencing another serious adverse event, then you can safely receive your second dose regardless of your age.

I HAD MY FIRST DOSE INTERSTATE OR OVERSEAS, HOW DO I MAKE AN APPOINTMENT FOR MY SECOND DOSE?

If you received one dose of the Pfizer or AstraZeneca vaccine while interstate or overseas, you can book your second appointment using the [vaccination clinics and sites page](#).

If you received one dose but are not currently eligible in the South Australian vaccine rollout, you can book your appointment by calling the SA COVID-19 Information Line on 1800 253 787. You will be required to provide evidence of your first vaccination.

If you received a dose of a COVID-19 vaccine not approved for use in Australia, you should discuss this with your GP, as you may benefit from a further vaccination.

AFTER RECEIVING THE COVID-19 VACCINE

HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE FOR THE COVID-19 VACCINE TO PROTECT ME?

The COVID-19 vaccines require the full two dose course for the best immune response. Whilst you may be partially protected against COVID-19 as soon as 12 days after the first dose, this protection is likely to be short lived.

The second dose encourages the body to create stronger protection against the virus that causes COVID-19. Individuals may not be fully protected until 7 to 14 days after their second dose of the COVID-19 vaccines.

HOW LONG WILL THE COVID-19 VACCINE PROTECT ME FOR?

Clinical trials have shown the COVID-19 vaccines protect against COVID-19 symptoms and severe disease after a person receives two doses. At this stage, there is not enough information to understand the long term protection against COVID-19 after vaccination. Booster doses may be required similar to other vaccinations, such as the flu vaccine.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) is monitoring the ongoing research to understand how the vaccines work over time.

This is why it's important that even if you have been vaccinated, you should continue practising good hygiene and physical distancing, using the COVID SAfe Check-In, and getting tested and staying home if you are unwell.

CAN I CATCH COVID-19 EVEN IF I'VE HAD THE VACCINE?

It is still possible to catch COVID-19 even if you have been vaccinated. The COVID-19 vaccines train your immune system to recognise COVID-19 and have been designed to help you fight off COVID-19 before it makes you sick, and reduce the severity of your symptoms if you do get sick.

Most vaccines work in this way and the goal is to prevent serious illness and death. This is why it's important that everyone gets vaccinated.

IF I CATCH COVID-19 AFTER I HAVE THE VACCINE, CAN I PASS THE INFECTION ONTO OTHERS?

It is still possible to pass on COVID-19 to other people even if you have been vaccinated, however, research is indicating that the vaccines may reduce how infectious a person is, which in turn may reduce the chance of them spreading the virus on to other people.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) is monitoring the ongoing research to understand whether the vaccines can stop a person passing the virus onto others.

This is why it's important that even if you have been vaccinated, you should continue practising good hygiene and physical distancing, using the COVID SAfe Check-In, and getting tested and staying home if you are unwell.

I FEEL UNWELL AFTER RECEIVING THE VACCINE, SHOULD I GET TESTED FOR COVID-19?

The vaccines are designed to prevent serious illness and death. You cannot catch COVID-19 from the COVID-19 vaccine, but you can still catch COVID-19 after being vaccinated.

For the next day or two following your vaccination, you may feel a little bit feverish, tired, or achy as side effects of the vaccine. If this happens, you do not need to get a COVID-19 test.

If you have these symptoms, and you also have COVID-19 symptoms such as fever or chills, cough, sore throat, runny nose, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell, or diarrhoea and vomiting, you should get tested for COVID-19 immediately.

I'M FULLY VACCINATED, DO I STILL NEED TO HAVE A COVID-19 TEST IF I HAVE COVID-19 SYMPTOMS?

You should still have a COVID-19 test if you develop symptoms of COVID-19, no matter how mild. It is still possible to catch COVID-19 even if you have been fully vaccinated, and you could pass the virus on to other people who may not be vaccinated. It's important to get tested for COVID-19 if you are unwell to help us detect any COVID-19 in our community before it can spread to others.

Symptoms include fever or chills, cough, sore throat, runny nose, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell, or diarrhoea and vomiting.

DO I STILL NEED TO QUARANTINE IF I'VE BEEN FULLY VACCINATED?

You still need to comply with the restrictions in South Australia, including quarantine and testing requirements, even if you've been fully vaccinated against COVID-19. This includes arrivals from overseas.

It is still possible to catch COVID-19 even if you have been fully vaccinated and you could pass the virus on to others who may not be vaccinated.

WILL I BE CONTACTED AFTER MY APPOINTMENT?

You may be followed up with an automated text message three days and eight days after the vaccine. You will be asked if you have had any side effects and the information will contribute to [AusVaxSafety's national COVID-19 vaccine safety surveillance](#).

[AusVaxSafety](#) is a world-leading national vaccine safety system, led by the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance.

ASTRAZENECA COVID-19 VACCINE

WHAT IS THROMBOSIS WITH THROMBOCYTOPENIA (TTS)?

[Thrombosis with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome \(TTS\)](#) is a rare side effect of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine. The condition is extremely rare, can be very serious and can cause long term disability or death.

- > **Thrombosis** is the formation of a blood clot, which prevents blood flowing normally through the body.
- > **Thrombocytopenia** is a condition in which you have a low blood platelet (thrombocytes) count. Platelets are blood cells that help blood clot and stop bleeding by clumping and forming plugs in blood vessel injuries.
- > **Thrombosis with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (TTS)** is a rare and new syndrome which involves blood clots (occurring in body sites like the brain or abdomen) together with low platelet levels.

TTS typically occurs around 4 to 30 days after vaccination with AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine.

If you experience the following symptoms after your vaccination you should seek medical attention immediately:

- > A severe persistent headache with additional features:
 - appears at least 4 days after vaccination
 - does not improve with simple painkillers
 - may be worse when lying down
 - may be accompanied by nausea and vomiting
- > Neurological symptoms such as:
 - blurred vision
 - difficulty with speech
 - drowsiness
 - seizures
- > Shortness of breath
- > Chest pain
- > Swelling in your leg
- > Persistent abdominal (belly) pain
- > Tiny blood spots under the skin away from the site of injection.

AM I AT A HIGHER RISK OF DEVELOPING TTS IF I'M ALREADY SUSCEPTIBLE TO BLOOD CLOTS?

So far no specific biological risk factors or pre-existing medical conditions have been found to increase or decrease the risk of Thrombosis with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (TTS). However, if you have any concerns, you should discuss them with your doctor.

ATAGI recommends that vaccination with any COVID-19 vaccine should be deferred for people who have a confirmed medical history of:

- > cerebral venous sinus thrombosis (CVST)
- > heparin induced thrombocytopenia (HIT)
- > idiopathic splanchnic (mesenteric, portal and splenic) venous thrombosis
- > anti-phospholipid syndrome with thrombosis.

HOW CAN I GET THE COVID-19 ASTRAZENECA VACCINE IF I AM 18 TO 59 YEARS OLD?

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) recommends the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine as the preferred vaccine for people aged 12 to 59 years, but the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine can be provided to people aged 18 to 59 years of age following an appropriate risk/benefit assessment and informed consent process with their vaccine provider.

To get vaccinated with the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, you will need to make an informed decision by speaking with your vaccine provider. Some conditions may mean it is not suitable for you and it is important that you discuss this with your healthcare provider.

You can find a clinic near you by visiting our [vaccination clinics and sites page](#).

I AM 60 AND OVER AND I HAVE BOOKED MY FIRST DOSE OF THE ASTRAZENECA COVID-19 VACCINE, CAN I CHANGE MY BOOKING FOR THE PFIZER COVID-19 VACCINE?

If you already have an existing booking for your first dose of AstraZeneca at an SA Health vaccination clinic, please do not cancel your appointment. You will have the option to have Pfizer or AstraZeneca at your appointment.

SAFETY, TESTING AND TRIALS

HOW ARE VACCINES APPROVED FOR USE IN AUSTRALIA?

Before any vaccine is registered for use, it is tested extensively during development and then in thousands of people. Testing begins with laboratory research, then animal studies and finally human clinical trials using volunteers.

Before any vaccine is approved for use in Australia it must pass the Australian Government's Therapeutic Goods Administration's (TGA) rigorous assessment and approval processes. This includes assessment of its safety, quality and effectiveness.

The COVID-19 vaccines being used in Australia have been approved by the TGA and 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 \(ATAGI\)](#).

The TGA is actively monitoring COVID-19 vaccine development in Australia and around the world, and is part of a network of international regulators that meet regularly to discuss the development of COVID-19 vaccines.

ARE THE COVID-19 VACCINES SAFE?

All vaccines, including the COVID-19 vaccines, are thoroughly tested for safety before they are approved for use in Australia. The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) approves all COVID-19 vaccines being used in Australia to ensure extremely high safety standards are met. This includes careful analysis of clinical trial data, ingredients, chemistry, manufacturing and other factors.

With billions of people vaccinated globally with these vaccines, real-world data is showing high effectiveness for both vaccines.

Real-world data has also uncovered an extremely rare blood clotting syndrome that is a rare side effect of the AstraZeneca vaccine. The TGA and the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) responded quickly, updating their advice to provide new guidelines for the use of AstraZeneca in Australia.

We can be confident that both vaccines are safe and provide protection against serious illness and death from COVID-19.

WHAT CHECKS ARE IN PLACE TO ENSURE PEOPLE RECEIVE THE CORRECT DOSAGE OF THE VACCINE?

The person vaccinating you has completed COVID-19 vaccination training. In South Australia, two trained staff members check the dosage prior to vaccination as an additional safety measure.

The Australian Government partnered with the Australian College of Nursing to develop and deliver accredited training modules to ensure vaccinators can safely manage and administer COVID-19 vaccines.

ARE THE VACCINES BEING MONITORED IN AUSTRALIA?

The Therapeutic Goods Association (TGA) tests every batch of COVID-19 vaccines to check how potent they are and ensure they have not been contaminated before they are dispatched for delivery.

You may also receive a text message after your vaccination. This will ask if you have had any side effects and the information contributes to [AusVaxSafety's national COVID-19 vaccine safety surveillance](#).

[AusVaxSafety](#) is a world-leading national vaccine safety system, led by the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance.

The TGA and the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) are monitoring the safety of the vaccines in Australia and overseas.

HOW WERE THE VACCINES DEVELOPED AND APPROVED IN A SHORT TIMEFRAME?

All available resources and efforts across the world have been directed towards finding an effective vaccine, due to the urgency of protecting us from COVID-19.

Some of the reasons behind this rapid progress include:

- > Unprecedented levels of funding and collaboration between vaccine developers and governments around the world. Planning was undertaken early, including investing in manufacturing facilities before the vaccines were available.
- > Technology has evolved to make vaccine development faster than in the past. To develop a vaccine, scientists need to understand the virus's genetic code. New technology allowed researchers to quickly identify the genetic code of the COVID-19 virus soon after it emerged and scientists around the world could start work designing and building vaccines quickly.
- > Clinical trials progress more quickly if a disease is widespread, which was the case for COVID-19. Researchers could evaluate the effect of a vaccine between the unvaccinated and vaccinated groups much sooner than for a rare disease.

WHAT WAS INVOLVED IN COVID-19 VACCINE TRIALS?

Before any vaccine is registered for use, it is tested extensively during development and then in thousands of people. Testing begins with laboratory research, then animal studies and finally human clinical trials using volunteers.

Clinical trials must provide scientific evidence which demonstrates that the benefits of a vaccine greatly outweigh any risks. There are different phases of clinical trials:

- > **Phase 1** clinical trials usually include a few dozen healthy adult volunteers. They focus primarily on establishing that the vaccine is safe and on demonstrating that the vaccine induces an immune response.
- > **Phase 2** clinical trials have hundreds of volunteers and can include specific groups the vaccine is intended for. These trials aim to test whether the vaccine causes an immune response and confirm that it is safe with minor side effects.
- > **Phase 3** clinical trials include many thousands of participants. They aim to test whether a vaccine is effective in preventing people from getting the disease, such as COVID-19. These trials also thoroughly assess the vaccine for safety and side effects. Researchers usually compare data between vaccinated people and those who received a placebo to compare the frequency of infection, disease severity and any reported side effects between the two groups.

For the COVID-19 vaccines, some of these phases have been combined. For example, in Phase 1 and 2 trials, results are analysed after the first few dozen volunteers are studied. The trial then proceeds in hundreds more people. Some Phase 3 studies start once preliminary data from Phase 1 and 2 trials are available. Having these 'overlapping' timeframes helped develop the COVID-19 vaccines quickly, to make them available earlier.

OTHER QUESTIONS

HOW LONG DO I HAVE TO WAIT BETWEEN RECEIVING THE COVID-19 VACCINE AND ANOTHER TYPE OF VACCINE?

The recommended minimum interval between other vaccines and a dose of COVID-19 vaccine is 7 days either side. This can be shortened (including same day administration) in special circumstances.

Speak to your GP or vaccine provider for more information.

CAN I LEAVE QUARANTINE TO GET MY FIRST DOSE OF COVID-19 VACCINATION?

You cannot leave quarantine to get a first dose of the COVID-19 vaccination. You should reschedule your appointment.

CAN I LEAVE QUARANTINE TO GET MY SECOND DOSE OF THE COVID-19 VACCINE?

If you are due to get your second dose of the Pfizer vaccine, you have up to 42 days from your first dose to get your second dose, and should reschedule your appointment within this timeframe if possible.

If you are due to get your second dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine, you have up to 12 weeks from your first dose to get your second dose, and should reschedule your appointment within this timeframe if possible.

CAN I GET THE COVID-19 VACCINES IF I HAVE DERMAL FILLERS?

It is still safe to get the COVID-19 vaccine if you have dermal fillers.

Infrequently, people with dermal fillers might experience swelling at or near the site of filler injection (usually on the face or lips) after being vaccinated. Evidence suggests these reactions can be triggered by viral and bacterial illness, vaccinations such as the influenza or COVID-19 vaccines, and dental procedures.

The swelling appears to be temporary, may resolve without treatment, and responds well to medical treatment if necessary. If you experience swelling at or near a dermal filler site following your vaccination, contact your healthcare provider.

DO I NEED TO GET VACCINATED IF I HAVE ALREADY HAD COVID-19?

You should be vaccinated regardless of whether you already had COVID-19 infection, as reinfection is possible. It is not yet known how long someone is protected from getting sick again after recovering from COVID-19 and the natural immunity developed by people who have had COVID-19 varies from person to person.

It is recommended to still receive COVID-19 vaccines as long as you are feeling well and no longer have confirmed infection.

There is no known disadvantage to having the COVID-19 vaccine when previously exposed or infected with COVID-19.

CAN THE VACCINES GIVE ME COVID-19?

No, COVID-19 vaccines do not use the live or whole virus that causes COVID-19.

IS THE PFIZER COVID-19 VACCINE SAFE FOR CHILDREN?

Yes. Evidence from clinical trials of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine found that the vaccine was 100% effective for children aged 12 to 15 years (7 days after the second dose). The immune response was higher in this group of participants than those aged 16 to 25.

The trial found no vaccine-related serious adverse events.

Based on this evidence, the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) granted provisional registration for the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine to be administered to anyone aged 12 and over (previously 16+).

More information is available on the [Department of Health website](#).

DO COVID-19 VACCINES CAUSE INFERTILITY?

There is no evidence that COVID-19 vaccines have any impact on fertility.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) will not approve a vaccine for use in Australia unless it is safe and effective, including impacts on fertility. There is no evidence that antibodies formed from COVID-19 vaccination cause any problems with pregnancy, including the development of the placenta.

Getting vaccinated before conceiving will give you some protection against COVID-19 throughout your pregnancy, depending on when you were vaccinated.

For more information, read the [Australian Government's COVID-19 vaccination decision guide for women who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or planning pregnancy](#).

WILL THE VACCINES BE HARMFUL TO UNBORN CHILDREN?

It is not expected that the vaccine can cause any serious problems in pregnant women or their babies.

Other vaccines given during pregnancy, such as the influenza vaccine or whooping cough vaccine, do not cause unexpected side effects in pregnant women or their babies. They protect newborn babies from these diseases.

The COVID-19 vaccines have not yet been studied in pregnant women, though real-world data is starting to become available for babies who have been born after their mothers had the COVID-19 vaccine. Multiple babies have been born with COVID-19 antibodies because their mothers were vaccinated.

For more information, read the [Australian Government's COVID-19 vaccination decision guide for women who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or planning pregnancy](#).

MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the COVID-19 vaccines, visit the [Australian Government Department of Health](#) website, which also has a range of [translated information](#).

For information about the use of the COVID-19 vaccines in South Australia, visit covidvaccine.sa.gov.au. To book an appointment, visit www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/covidvaccine.

For more information

SA COVID-19 Information Line 1800 253 787
covidvaccine.sa.gov.au

