



Australian Government



Primary Care Vaccine Roll-out

Phase 1b Bulletin

22 April, 2021

These bulletins are intended to provide you with regular updates and guidance on the COVID-19 Vaccine Program. They will be provided monthly, but may be provided more frequently as needed.

The recent recommendations from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) in response to the rare cases of thrombosis with thrombocytopenia (TTS) associated with the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine has strong implications for the COVID-19 Vaccine Roll-out.

We appreciate that it has had a flow-on impact on the primary care sector and vaccination providers, with some cancellations of appointments and resulting in increased vaccine hesitancy.

Providing access to the COVID-19 Vaccine is key to protecting the Australian population against COVID-19. As stated by ATAGI **'While Australia currently has very low or no community transmission of COVID-19, this could change, particularly in the context of high global transmission rates, including of new variants of the virus. The risk of serious disease and death in Australia remains, even as borders controls and other measures continue.'**

Thank you again for your patience and commitment to supporting your local community, and being part of the biggest mass vaccination program in Australia's history.

We will continue to provide you with as much information and guidance as possible as it becomes available to assist you to continue this important work.

Sources of Communication

Vaccination sites are recommended to add the below email addresses to your safe senders list as they may be used to send important communications about the COVID-19 Vaccination Program:

- no-reply@cvas-mail.health.gov.au
- No-Reply.Vaccine@Health.gov.au

Updated Information

The most up to date information on the roll-out, including clinical and program guidance, can be found on the Department of Health Website. We recommend you regularly review the below pages:

- **General program updates:** <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/information-for-covid-19-vaccination-providers>
- **Clinical updates:** <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/information-for-covid-19-vaccination-providers/covid-19-vaccine-clinical-considerations>

Key messages from Department of Health:

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 you would like to commence vaccinating under 50s early, please contact your PHN directly.

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>

Risk-benefit of receiving AstraZeneca

The Government has accepted ATAGI's advice for Pfizer (Comirnaty) to be the preferred vaccine for individuals under 50 and that the **AstraZeneca vaccine should only be used in adults aged under 50 where the benefits clearly outweigh the risk** for that individual and the person has made an informed decision based on an understanding of the risks and benefits.

ATAGI has developed **advice on the risk-benefit of receiving an AstraZeneca vaccination** against COVID-19 to assist vaccination providers in supporting patients to make an informed decision. This advice can be found on the Department's website at:

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

Training

In the last few weeks there have been a number of updates to the COVID-19 Vaccination Training Program. The training has been updated to reflect the latest advice from ATAGI, the TGA, and the Department. Most importantly the modules have been updated to provide new advice on Thrombosis with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (TTS) and updated handling and storage advice for the COVID-19 vaccines.

It is important that all vaccination providers log back into the training platform to review the updates. A summary of the updates can be found in the announcement board, located at the top of the main page. All changes are also identified as 'NEW' in the modules.

Indemnity

Liabilities associated with the administration of the COVID-19 Vaccine would be treated on the same basis as liabilities arising from the administration of any other vaccines under existing indemnity insurance arrangements, subject to any exclusions.

The Australian Government has programs and initiatives in place. However, in addition, the Government will review arrangements in the event that a higher than expected number of claims associated with the vaccination effort arises or the measures currently in place prove to be inadequate/insufficient.

The Australian Government has also agreed to certain indemnities with COVID-19 vaccine suppliers. These indemnities are designed to operate if there are problems which flow from the vaccines themselves.

Billing

The vaccine must be free for everyone in Australia. Cost should not be barrier for access to the COVID-19 vaccine. An individual must not be billed for their vaccine suitability assessment or administration of the vaccine – including those who are not eligible for Medicare or Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) clients.

For Medicare-eligible DVA clients, general practices can use the same [MBS item numbers](#) used for the general public.

[DVA clients can use their Veteran Card](#) as per usual DVA arrangements for:

- using a [Veteran Gold Card](#)
- using a [Veteran White Card](#) if it relates to an accepted condition. Services Australia will accept the clinical judgement of the general practitioner to determine what accepted condition requires the administration of the COVID-19 vaccine.

Individuals who are not enrolled with Medicare can receive the vaccine for free from a GP-led Respiratory Clinic (GPRC) or a state/territory vaccination clinic (once operational). GPs will not be able to claim through the MBS for individuals without a Medicare (or DVA) card, and cannot charge individuals for a COVID-19 vaccine service.

Vaccine providers can submit vaccination information for individuals without a Medicare number into the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) by entering their name, date of birth, gender and address. Recognised vaccination providers can access an individual's AIR record and the AIR provides individuals with an Immunisation History Statement (IHS). The IHS can be viewed and printed via Medicare Online, myGov or the Express Plus Medicare mobile app. Individuals can also contact Services Australia on 1800 653 809 to request an IHS be posted to them, or their vaccination provider can print an IHS on their behalf.

Ordering, Deliveries and Inventory Management

The regular ordering and delivery cycle has commenced, with **ordering windows opening on Saturday and closing 11.59pm Friday each week**. Deliveries will be made in the following fortnight for use from the following Monday.

Vaccination sites are reminded to go into the CVAS ordering portal (at www.health.gov.au/cvas) to complete:

- their Delivery Acceptance Report **on the day vaccines are delivered**; and
- their Stock Management Report **by 9pm (local time) each Friday**.

These regular reports are required each week. If they are not completed in the CVAS online portal **this may affect your ability to place future orders**.

If you have submitted your reports elsewhere or are yet to submit your reports, please log into the CVAS portal to complete all required reports for each week.

The Department is constantly reviewing the functionality of the ordering portal to streamline the ordering process and provide vaccination sites with more detailed information on expected delivery windows.

Upcoming updates to the portal include:

- An easier to read process for ordering vaccines and consumables. Remember to click next to complete your orders for vaccines and consumables.
- In the coming months, more information on expected delivery date of your orders will be available through CVAS. Placed orders will be updated with a refined expected delivery date as delivery schedules are finalised.

Consumables

The Department of Health is currently working on solutions to help minimise delays in consumable deliveries in the future, such as looking at delivering consumables for a greater period in advance e.g. a month of supplies.

More advice on this will be provided in the near future.

If sites are using consumables that they have sourced elsewhere or from their own stock, please note that they must be in compliance with relevant guidelines and training provided e.g. needle length.

COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic Finder

We acknowledge that some clinics have had the incorrect information published on the Vaccine Clinic Finder. The Department is working closely with Primary Health Networks (PHN), the affected clinics and Healthdirect to ensure changes are made as quickly as possible.

Once the PHN provides the Department with updates to the Vaccine Clinic Finder, it typically takes 24 to 48hrs for the changes to be reflected online. The exception to this is if the information needs further clarification or requires integration on the back end with online booking providers.

We will continue to urgently make updates as we receive them and encourage you to continue to provide you updates directly to your PHN.

If no appointments are showing up in the Vaccine Clinic Finder but your booking provider is displayed, please contact your booking provider to make appointments available.

Updated Documents

Information for Immunisation Providers on Thrombosis with Thrombocytopenia Syndrome (TTS) following COVID-19 vaccination:

The department has published a fact sheet for vaccine providers of COVID-19 vaccines. This resource provides advice on the link between the AstraZeneca vaccine and a rare new adverse event called thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS).

This can be found on the Department's website at:

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/covid-19-vaccination-information-for-immunisation-providers-on-thrombosis-with-thrombocytopenia-syndrome-tts-following-covid-19-vaccination>

Clinical advice continues to be reviewed and updated. Link to updated resources will be provided as documents are published.

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>