



# Consent guidance material for residential aged care

25 July 2022

## National COVID-19 vaccination program

COVID-19 can cause serious respiratory infection and ongoing health issues, particularly in older people. Vaccination is a safe and effective way to help protect you and the residents in your care from serious illness, hospitalisation or death caused by the COVID-19 virus.

Following expert advice from the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) and Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI), the Australian Government established a national COVID-19 vaccine booster program for residential aged care.

A booster vaccination is recommended 3 months after a person receives their second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

ATAGI also recommends an additional COVID-19 vaccine dose for residents in aged care facilities before winter. ATAGI recommends residents receive their COVID-19 Winter dose from 3 months after their initial booster dose, or 3 months after a confirmed COVID-19 infection where this occurred after an initial booster dose.

The recommended COVID-19 Winter vaccine dose is to bolster residents' protection from severe illness, hospitalisation or death from COVID-19 over the Winter season.

## Consent

As with all other vaccines, valid consent is required before administering each COVID-19 vaccine dose. Written consent is not mandatory for residents. Verbal consent can be recorded in resident care notes following usual practices.

The Australian Government has prepared written consent forms which can be used to provide consent to participate in the vaccination program, including to receive a booster or Winter dose. You can also use your own form, but it must capture the necessary information to show that the person consents to a COVID-19 vaccine.

For some residents, consent will need to be sought from a substitute decision-maker and through a supported decision-making process.

Decisions by some jurisdictions have specific requirements relevant to guardians (or substitute decision-makers) consenting on behalf of another person. Substitute decision-makers should refer to relevant state and territory laws for more information.

Even when someone has a level of cognitive decline, the preference is to discuss with them their wishes and preferences in relation to vaccination.

Residents, their family, carers and decision-makers may wish to engage with clinical staff at the facility, their GP, or other health professionals to discuss the risks and benefits of vaccines. It is important to consider the clinical suitability of the resident to receive a primary, booster or Winter dose, and to ensure consent is informed.

For further information about consent, refer to the [Australian Immunisation Handbook – Preparing for vaccination – Valid consent](#).

A decision to not get vaccinated will not affect anyone's access to safe, quality residential aged care. The [Charter of Aged Care Rights](#) supports older people in their decisions about their care.

## Guidance materials

[Guidance materials](#) are available to support consent processes including:

- Consent forms for primary, booster and Winter doses of COVID-19 vaccines (It is recommended a consent form is completed for workers and residents wanting to participate in the COVID-19 vaccination program)
- Information on COVID-19 Pfizer (Comirnaty) vaccine – fact sheet
- Pre-vaccine information (ATAGI)
- Post-vaccine information (ATAGI)
- Consent – patient resource (ATAGI)
- Consent – process map

Information on COVID-19 vaccination, including a [fact sheet](#) on the booster program and [fact sheet](#) on the Winter dose, should be provided to residents, their families and loved ones, along with substitute decision-makers. It can assist them to make informed decisions about COVID-19 vaccines for themselves, or in line with the wishes and preferences of the person they are acting on behalf of.

For advice on how to best support residents living with dementia or cognitive impairment, contact the National Dementia Helpline on 1800 100 500 (Monday-Friday 8:00am-8:00pm). The Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN) provides free, confidential and independent advocates who can discuss an older person's rights surrounding COVID-19 vaccination. OPAN is available on 1800 700 600.

Learn more at the Department of Health and Aged Care's [COVID-19 vaccines website](#).