



Australian Government

COVID-19 VACCINATION

Keep your disability workforce up to date by circulating this alert widely in your organisation

Disability provider alert

11 July 2022

New expanded ATAGI recommendations

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) has updated its recommendations for a fourth (winter) dose of COVID-19 vaccine. This dose will help to reduce severe disease from the emerging surge of Omicron BA.4 and BA.5 subvariant infections. It will also help to reduce the burden on Australian hospitals and the healthcare system in coming months.

Adults aged 50 to 64 years are now recommended to receive a fourth (winter) dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. Adults aged 30 to 49 years can also elect to receive a fourth dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

The interval recommended between booster doses (or infection) is now **3 months**.

ATAGI emphasises that people previously eligible for a winter dose remain at higher risk of severe disease and death from COVID-19. This cohort should receive a fourth (winter) dose as soon as possible. They include:

- all adults aged 65 years or older
- residents of aged care or disability care facilities
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 50 years or older
- people who are severely immunocompromised (this may be their 5th dose)
- people aged 16 years or older with a medical condition that increases the risk of severe COVID-19 illness, and
- people aged 16 years or older with disability, significant or complex health needs, or multiple comorbidities which increase the risk of a poor outcome.

Update on Commonwealth Vaccination In-Reach Program

Commonwealth vaccination providers **are currently contacting residential disability service providers** to offer in-reach for COVID-19 vaccination. If residents are due for their next dose, please book in as soon as possible.

To get more support you can also contact us at disabilitycovidvaccinedelivery@health.gov.au.

What if a substitute decision maker says ‘no’ to a COVID-19 vaccination on behalf of a person with disability?

The Department has prepared guidance for disability support providers on what they can do if a substitute decision maker says no to COVID-19 vaccination, [here](#). This guidance is targeted at providers supporting adults with intellectual disability.

COVID Oral Treatments

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee has expanded the eligibility criteria for COVID-19 oral antiviral treatments effective from 11 July 2022.

Eligibility has been broadened to include people who have chronic respiratory issues due to conditions such as COPD and moderate or severe asthma. There is also greater access for adults living with disability who have multiple medical conditions.

The new eligibility includes updated age limits and risk factors:

Older Australians and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, who test positive for COVID-19.

- 70 years or older
- 50 years or older with 2 risk factors
- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, 30 years or older and with 2 risk factors.

Risk factors include:

- living in residential aged care
- living with disability with multiple conditions and/or frailty (but not limited to living in supported accommodation)
- neurological conditions like stroke or dementia and demyelinating conditions e.g. multiple sclerosis, Guillain-Barre Syndrome
- chronic respiratory conditions including COPD, moderate or severe asthma
- obesity or diabetes (type I or II requiring medication)
- congestive heart failure, coronary artery disease, cardiomyopathies
- kidney failure or cirrhosis
- living remotely with reduced access to higher level healthcare.

People aged 18 years and older who are moderately to severely immunocompromised and test positive for COVID-19.

Conditions include:

- blood cancer or some red blood cell disorders (thalassemia, sickle cell disease)
- transplant recipient
- primary or acquired (HIV) immunodeficiency
- chemotherapy or whole-body radiotherapy in the last 3 months
- high dose corticosteroids or pulse corticosteroid therapy in the last 3 months
- immunosuppressive treatments in the last 3 months
- rituximab in the last 12 months
- cerebral palsy or down syndrome
- congenital heart disease
- living with disability with multiple conditions and/or frailty

Additional information can be found in the [PBAC Outcome Statement](#)

The medications are taken from when symptoms start or as soon as possible after testing positive for COVID-19. **It is important that a plan is in place for when and how to access oral treatments before someone gets sick.**

For more information, please see: <https://www.health.gov.au/oral-treatments>

Long COVID

Long COVID can make people feel unwell for many weeks, or months, and even after they no longer have COVID-19. Some symptoms of long COVID include extreme tiredness, coughing, breathlessness, and problems with memory and concentration.

Patients with long COVID can access a range of [Medicare rebates](#) for the treatment of their condition. This includes time tiered GP general attendance and referral to specialists.

Useful resources

- [Top three questions – What is long COVID?](#)
- [How do I know if I have long COVID?](#)
- [Factsheet – long term effects of COVID-19](#)
- [Patient Resource Managing post-COVID-19 Symptoms](#)

Assistance for people with disability, providers, carers and families

Disability Gateway on **1800 643 787** - open from 8 am to 8 pm, Monday to Friday.
Department of Health website at www.health.gov.au
National Coronavirus and COVID-19 Vaccine Helpline on **1800 020 080** (people with disability, their families and carers should select Option 5, disability workers should select Option 4).
For information in a language other than English, call the National Coronavirus and COVID-19 Vaccine Helpline on **1800 020 080** and press option 8. This is a free service.
The Translating and Interpreting Service is also available on **131 450**.
For people who are deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment, call the National Relay Service on **133 677**.

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