
Advisory Committee on the Health Emergency Response to Coronavirus (COVID-19) for People with Disability Meeting 19 July 2022 – Summary of Outcomes

Committee members with lived experience of disability and carers raised the following issues:

- confusion caused by use of terms such as ‘winter’ to describe COVID-19 vaccine booster doses
- the importance of equitable and timely access to COVID-19 oral treatments
- alternative ways people with swallowing difficulties can take COVID-19 oral treatments, and
- advice for people at greater risk from COVID-19 who received their fourth dose (or fifth dose for people who are severely immunocompromised) several months ago.

Professor Michael Kidd AM, Deputy Chief Medical Officer provided updates on:

- COVID-19 epidemiology and Omicron sub-variants BA.4, BA.5 and BA.275
- Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation’s (ATAGI) recommendations for fourth doses (or fifth dose for people with severe immunocompromise), and
- a pre-exposure prophylaxis medicine called Evusheld which the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has provisionally approved.

Professor Kidd outlined the role of COVID-19 vaccination and COVID-19 oral medicines in reducing incidence of severe disease from the emerging surge of Omicron BA.4 and BA.5 subvariant infections. He also emphasised that individuals who have previously had SARS-CoV-2 should receive recommended vaccine doses after an interval of 3 months from infection. Prior infection alone does not provide sufficient protection against severe disease.

The Department presented data on vaccination in people with disability. It covered the vaccination rate of National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants and Disability Support Pension (DSP) recipients. This included:

- COVID-19 vaccination rates by housing type and supported accommodation by jurisdiction, and
- Influenza vaccination rates by jurisdiction.

Committee members noted their support for in-reach influenza vaccination programs for people with disability at greater risk from influenza who cannot access in-home vaccination.

Members also raised the continuing importance of meaningful consultation with the Committee as part of COVID-19 policy development for people with disability and the disability sector.

Next steps

The Department will:

- circulate updated guidance on COVID-19 oral treatments for people with disability with information on which medicines can be crushed or taken as a solution
- circulate information to committee members on state-run influenza vaccination in-reach programs
- seek advice from the TGA on how Evusheld eligibility criteria applies to people with Down Syndrome, and
- seek advice from ATAGI on the eligibility of carers and supporters of people with disability under the age of 30 for the fourth dose. This is a fifth dose for people who are severely immunocompromised.

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled for 2 August 2022.