



Australian Government



COVID-19 vaccine booster doses: common questions

This information is accurate as at 10 November 2021.

1. Why do I need to have a booster dose if I have already had two doses of COVID-19 vaccine?

Australia's immunisation experts, the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) have advised that people aged 18 years and over can access a booster dose of COVID-19 vaccine to maintain maximum protection against COVID-19.

A booster dose increases your protection against infection with the virus that causes COVID-19, severe disease, and dying from COVID-19. A booster dose will continue to protect you, your loved ones and your community against COVID-19.

2. What happens if I do not get a booster?

If you do not get a booster dose, your level of immunity to COVID-19 may reduce. It could get to a level where you no longer have enough protection against infection. If this happens you could increase your chances of becoming infected with COVID-19 or passing it to others. Booster doses are not mandatory.

3. Will I need to get a booster dose every year?

The current advice is for a single booster dose at least six months after you had your second dose. ATAGI continues to review data and research studies and will provide advice on whether additional, ongoing booster doses will be required.

4. Which vaccine should I get for my booster dose?

ATAGI currently recommends the Pfizer (Comirnaty) vaccine for your booster dose even if you had a different vaccine for your initial course. The Pfizer vaccine is preferred and approved. You can also receive the AstraZeneca (Vaxzevria) vaccine as a booster dose if you cannot have the Pfizer vaccine for medical reasons or have had two doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine previously.

5. When will I be eligible to get a booster dose?

You will be eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine booster dose if you are 18 years and older and have had your second dose of your primary course vaccination at least six months ago. Booster doses

are not currently recommended for people under 18 years, as severe COVID-19 is not common in this age group, and the primary course of COVID-19 vaccine provides a strong immune response.

6. Why do I have to wait to get a booster dose?

Research shows that a booster dose is not required earlier than six months after your second dose. Having a booster dose six months or more after your second dose increases your protection against COVID-19.

7. How will I know when to get a booster dose?

You should book for a booster dose if it has been six months or longer since your second dose of COVID-19 vaccine. The date you had your second dose of vaccine will be on your COVID-19 vaccination certificate. Talk to your doctor if you are not sure about the timing of your booster dose.

8. Where will booster doses be available?

The booster doses are available through doctors' clinics, participating pharmacies, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, and government vaccination clinics.

9. How do I book in to get a booster?

You can book to get your booster dose six months after your second dose of vaccine. To book an appointment, speak to your doctor, visit the Vaccine Clinic Finder at www.covid-vaccine.healthdirect.gov.au or www.australia.gov.au or call 1800 020 080. For interpreting services, call 131 450.

10. Will I have to pay for a booster vaccine?

COVID vaccines, including booster doses, are free for everyone in Australia. Your Medicare or visa status does not matter – you can still get a free COVID-19 vaccination, including a booster dose.

11. Are booster doses recommended during pregnancy or while breastfeeding?

The Pfizer vaccine is recommended as a booster if you are pregnant or breastfeeding. Talk to your doctor about the benefit of a booster dose if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

12. If I got my first dose more than six months ago – have I been unprotected from COVID-19?

Protection against severe disease can remain high for more than six months after your second dose. Everyone has different levels of immunity to COVID-19 following vaccination. The booster dose will help maintain your protection. ATAGI looks at the data and research on vaccines around the world. Evidence suggests protection from the COVID-19 vaccine reduces over time, particularly after six months.

13. Am I still protected against the worst impacts of COVID-19?

The primary two-dose vaccination course provides a high level of protection against the worst effects of COVID-19. You need to follow medical advice and continue to follow safe practices like washing your hands, staying 1.5 metres away from others, checking into venues and wearing masks where required.

14. How will a booster be shown in my vaccine records?

Your booster dose will be recorded on your COVID-19 vaccination certificate. Visit the Services Australia website at www.servicesaustralia.gov.au for instructions on how to get proof of your COVID-19 vaccinations.

15. My family member lives in an aged care home or in supported disability accommodation – when and how will they get their booster dose?

The booster program is linked to the timing of completion of your primary course.

In Australia, COVID-19 vaccines were prioritised first for people most at risk of severe illness and death. Many of those people who were vaccinated first are now due for a booster dose.

The Australian Government's national in-reach clinic program for booster doses to residential aged care facilities and residential disability accommodation commenced on 8 November 2021.

In addition, people in these groups can also receive their booster through thousands of clinics in the community (many will have priority bookings for these groups).

16. I am an aged care, disability or home care support worker – will I need to get a booster dose to keep my job?

Booster doses are also not currently mandatory for residential aged care, disability and home care support workers but are strongly encouraged.

17. I am severely immunocompromised and need a 'third dose' – will I also need a booster dose?

Booster doses are not currently recommended for people who are severely immunocompromised who have had a three-dose course of the COVID-19 vaccine. ATAGI will continue to assess data and will provide more advice on booster doses for people who have had a three-dose course in the future.

18. How will people living in regional and remote areas get access to boosters?

Booster doses will be available to people in regional and remote areas the same way they received their first and second doses for example, doctors' clinics, participating pharmacies and government vaccinations clinics.

19. Has information on boosters been translated into my community's language?

Information on booster doses is available in over 60 languages on the Department of Health website, www.health.gov.au/covid19-vaccines-languages

You can also call 1800 020 080 for more information. For interpreting services, call 131 450.