



Australian Government



# Supporting residential aged care workers to get COVID-19 vaccinations

Information kit

10 August 2021

### **Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines prioritised for residential aged care workers**

Residential aged care workers are eligible to receive a Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine and are being prioritised in the Australian Government's vaccine rollout.

Professor Alison McMillan, the Australian Government's Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer said the number of places where residential aged care workers can get vaccinated as quickly and safely as possible are rapidly increasing.

"From 17 September 2021, residential aged care workers will be required to have a COVID-19 vaccination, based on expert medical advice," said Professor McMillan.

The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) stated that aged care residents are the most vulnerable population and managing their risk of infection can be assisted by decreasing transmission from people entering residential aged care facilities. People who are vaccinated are less likely to be significant drivers of spread.

Professor McMillan said the Australian Government is putting additional measures in place to help workers get a vaccine as a priority.

"Additional dedicated vaccination clinics, including in-reach, are available for residential aged care workers and residents not yet vaccinated. These clinics will be delivered by dedicated vaccine providers.

"Residential aged care workers should talk to their facility or employer about these dedicated vaccination clinics.

"It's really important workers do not wait. Vaccination is one of the best ways you can protect yourself, your loved ones and the people you care for, from COVID-19 disease," said Professor McMillan.

Workers should talk to their facility or employer about vaccination now. They can also find a COVID-19 vaccination clinic near them through the Australian Government's Eligibility Checker online at [australia.gov.au](https://australia.gov.au). Residential aged care workers are a priority, which means when they book an appointment, it will be scheduled as quickly as possible.

Professor McMillan said if workers have any questions about or need help getting their vaccine, they can call the dedicated COVID-19 Vaccine Helpline on 1800 020 080 and select option 4.

"Any worker who has concerns about vaccination should also talk to their doctor as soon as possible," said Professor McMillan.

A residential aged care worker is anyone employed or engaged by a residential aged care facility who works on-site at the facility, including staff who provide direct care; social and lifestyle services; administration and ancillary services such as cooking, cleaning and laundry; volunteers engaged by a facility; students on placement; and medical practitioners who deliver services in a facility. It includes staff who are full-time, part-time, casual or contracted (including agency labour hire).

Financial support is available for casual residential aged care workers who do not receive leave entitlements and need to go off-site to get vaccinated or need time to recover after their vaccination.

Professor McMillan also noted that our whole community should recognise, acknowledge and celebrate the important work aged care workers do, particularly after the past 18 months.

“Aged care workers have protected some of Australia’s most vulnerable, and for that I want to say thank you for your hard work, dedication and care throughout this pandemic. You are super heroes,” said Professor McMillan.

More information is available on the [Department of Health’s website](#).

#### **What can residential aged care workers do right now to get their vaccination?**

- Ask your facility or employer about dedicated vaccination clinics for workers.
- Find a COVID-19 vaccination clinic near you through the online Eligibility Checker at **australia.gov.au**. The Eligibility Checker is updated regularly as more clinics become available.
- Call the COVID-19 Vaccine Helpline on **1800 020 080** and select option 4.

### **Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines prioritised for residential aged care workers**

Residential aged care workers are eligible to receive a Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, regardless of age.

The number of places where residential aged care workers can get vaccinated as quickly and safely as possible is rapidly increasing.

The Australian Government is making sure residential aged care workers have access to vaccinations through their workplace.

Alternatively, workers can also call the COVID-19 Vaccine Helpline on **1800 020 080** (and select option 4) or use the online Eligibility Checker at [australia.gov.au](https://australia.gov.au) to find an appointment.

From 17 September 2021, residential aged care workers will be required to have a COVID-19 vaccination.

This [decision by National Cabinet](#) was based on expert medical advice provided by the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee.

### **How to make your COVID-19 vaccination appointment**

#### **Talk to your facility or employer about dedicated vaccination clinics for workers**

Every residential aged care worker will be offered a vaccination at their workplace. This may include in-reach clinics delivered at your aged care facility by Commonwealth vaccination providers, on site clinics conducted by their own employer or by visiting GPs.

In addition, dedicated vaccination hubs will be located near residential aged care facilities across Australia to provide further flexibility for workers to get vaccinated.

#### **Find a COVID-19 vaccination clinic near you via the online Eligibility Checker at [australia.gov.au](https://australia.gov.au)**

Through the Eligibility Checker, you can find details and locations of the below vaccination locations:

- GP clinics that are providing Pfizer vaccines
- Commonwealth Vaccination Clinics (GP respiratory clinics)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Services
- state or territory-run mass vaccination clinics
- dedicated Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine hubs.

Because you are identified as a priority for vaccination, when you book your appointment, it will be scheduled as quickly as possible. If you are arranging an appointment at a participating GP clinic, you can request a booking within 7 days.

The online Eligibility Checker is updated regularly as more clinics become available.

### **Call the dedicated COVID-19 Vaccine Helpline on 1800 020 080 (select option 4)**

The Helpline can answer any questions you may have about vaccination and can help residential aged care workers book a vaccination appointment.

### **Which workers are required to get a COVID-19 vaccine?**

From 17 September 2021, residential aged care workers employed or engaged by a residential aged care facility to work on-site at a facility are required to have a COVID-19 vaccination. This includes staff who are full-time; part-time; casual or contracted (including agency labour hire).

This includes staff who provide direct care; social and lifestyle services; administration and ancillary services such as cooking, cleaning and laundry; volunteers engaged by a facility; students on placement; and medical practitioners who deliver services in a facility.

It does not include people who provide in-reach services and are not employed directly by a facility, such as irregular volunteers, allied health professionals, couriers, tradespeople and aged care assessment staff.

This will be mandated through state and territory arrangements and may vary based on local circumstances.

### **Exemptions**

Medical exemptions and some limited temporary exemptions may be considered.

Medical exemptions will align with the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) clinical guidance on COVID-19 vaccine in Australia in 2021.

Selected medical practitioners can notify the Australian Immunisation Register of an individual who has a vaccine exemption due to medical contraindications, which will be displayed on an individual's immunisation history statement.

In some circumstances, a temporary exemption may apply if a residential aged care worker can demonstrate every effort to access a vaccination by mid-September 2021, but an inability to receive due to supply or access limitations.

A number of other limited and temporary exemptions may apply and are available on the [Department of Health's website](#).

Exemptions on religious, political and personal grounds will be finalised through State and Territory public health orders and directions. Currently, no exemptions will be made on these grounds. Further information on the specific application of these, including processes for managing exemptions and compliance, will be released soon.

## Information for workers who are pregnant, planning a pregnancy or breastfeeding

Evidence shows the vaccine is safe for pregnant women and breastfeeding women and Australian medical experts recommend the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for pregnant women.

On 9 June 2021, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and ATAGI released a joint statement recommending that pregnant women are routinely offered the Pfizer vaccine at any stage of pregnancy. This is due to the risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19 being significantly higher for pregnant women and their unborn baby.

Women who are breastfeeding or who are planning pregnancy are also recommended to receive the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. Women who are trying to become pregnant do not need to delay vaccination or avoid becoming pregnant after vaccination.

As such pregnancy can be managed in the same way as other medical exemptions, where a medical practitioner can notify the Australian Immunisation Register if a medical exemption for an individual is required.

## Financial support

Financial support is available for casual residential aged care workers who do not receive leave entitlements and need to go off-site to get vaccinated or need time to recover after their vaccination.

More information about this support is available on the [Department of Health's website](#).

## What can residential aged care workers do right now?

- Ask your facility or employer about dedicated vaccination clinics for workers.
- Find a COVID-19 vaccination clinic near you through the online Eligibility Checker at [australia.gov.au](https://australia.gov.au)
- Call the COVID-19 Vaccine Helpline on 1800 020 080 and select option 4.

## **Fact sheet**

### **COVID-19 vaccines for residential aged care workers**

#### **What you need to know**

Residential aged care workers are eligible to receive a Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, regardless of age.

The number of places where residential aged care workers can get vaccinated as quickly and safely as possible is rapidly increasing.

The Australian Government is making sure residential aged care workers have access to vaccinations through their workplace.

Alternatively, workers can also call the COVID-19 Vaccine Helpline on **1800 020 080** (and select option 4) or use the online Eligibility Checker at [australia.gov.au](https://australia.gov.au) to find an appointment.

From 17 September 2021, residential aged care workers will be required to have a COVID-19 vaccination.

#### **How to make your COVID-19 vaccination appointment**

##### **Talk to your facility or employer about dedicated vaccination clinics for workers**

Every residential aged care worker will have access to vaccination through their workplace.

This may include in-reach clinics delivered at your aged care facility by Commonwealth vaccination providers, on site clinics conducted by their own employer or by visiting GPs.

In addition, dedicated vaccination hubs will be located near residential aged care facilities across Australia to provide further flexibility for workers to get vaccinated.

##### **Find a COVID-19 vaccination clinic near you via the online Eligibility Checker at [australia.gov.au](https://australia.gov.au)**

Through the Eligibility Checker, you can find details and locations of the below vaccination locations:

- GP clinics that are providing Pfizer vaccines
- Commonwealth Vaccination Clinics (GP respiratory clinics)
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Services
- state or territory-run mass vaccination clinics
- dedicated Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine hubs.

Because you are identified as a priority for vaccination, when you book your appointment, it will be scheduled as quickly as possible. If you are arranging an appointment at a participating GP clinic, you can request a booking within 7 days.

The online Eligibility Checker is updated regularly as more clinics become available.

##### **Call the dedicated COVID-19 Vaccine Helpline on 1800 020 080 (select option 4)**

The Helpline can answer any questions you may have about vaccination and can help residential aged care workers book a vaccination appointment.

## Which workers are required to get a COVID-19 vaccine?

From 17 September 2021, residential aged care workers employed or engaged by a residential aged care facility to work on-site at a facility are required to have a COVID-19 vaccination. This includes staff who are full-time; part-time; casual or contracted (including agency labour hire). This includes staff who provide direct care; social and lifestyle services; administration and ancillary services such as cooking, cleaning and laundry; volunteers engaged by a facility; students on placement; and medical practitioners who deliver services in a facility.

It does not include people who provide in-reach services and are not employed directly by a facility, such as irregular volunteers, allied health professionals, couriers, tradespeople and aged care assessment staff.

This will be mandated through state and territory arrangements and may vary based on local circumstances.

Medical exemptions and some limited temporary exemptions may be considered.

More information on this is on the [Department of Health's website](#).

## Do you have concerns or need more information about vaccination?

If you have questions about getting your COVID-19 vaccination, call the dedicated COVID-19 Vaccine Helpline on 1800 020 080 and select option 4 at any time.

If you are concerned about vaccination, please talk to your doctor or health practitioner as soon as possible.

Visit the [Department of Health's website](#) for more information, including translated information and answers to frequently asked questions.



## **Q&As**

### **COVID-19 vaccines for residential aged care workers: Your questions, answered**

#### **When should I get vaccinated?**

Residential aged care workers need to get vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as possible. Do not wait – make an appointment now. Vaccination is one of the best ways you can protect yourself, your loved ones and the people you care for, from COVID-19 disease.

The number of places where residential aged care workers can get vaccinated as quickly and safely as possible is rapidly increasing. For more information, visit the [Department of Health's website](#).

#### **Is the vaccine mandatory?**

From 17 September 2021, COVID-19 vaccination will be mandatory for residential aged care workers.

It will be a requirement to have received a minimum first dose COVID-19 vaccine by that time as a condition of employment. This [decision by National Cabinet](#) was based on expert medical advice provided by the Australian Health Protection Principal Committee.

#### **Which workers are required to get a COVID-19 vaccine?**

From 17 September 2021, residential aged care workers employed or engaged by a residential aged care facility to work on-site at a facility are required to have a COVID-19 vaccination. This includes staff who are full-time; part-time; casual or contracted (including agency labour hire).

This includes staff who provide direct care; social and lifestyle services; administration and ancillary services such as cooking, cleaning and laundry; volunteers engaged by a facility; students on placement; and medical practitioners who deliver services in a facility.

It does not include people who provide in-reach services and are not employed directly by a facility, such as irregular volunteers, allied health professionals, couriers, tradespeople and aged care assessment staff.

This will be mandated through state and territory arrangements and may vary based on local circumstances.

Medical exemptions and some limited temporary exemptions may be considered.

More information on this is on the [Department of Health's website](#).

#### **What vaccine will I get?**

Residential aged care workers are eligible to receive a Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, regardless of age or location.

## Can I choose a different vaccine?

There are currently two COVID-19 vaccines available for use in Australia and both are effective in protecting you from serious illness or death from COVID-19.

All residential aged care workers are eligible to receive the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, regardless of age.

However, you can choose to receive the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine. For people aged 60 years and over, this vaccine is available. If you are aged under 60 years, you will need to speak to your doctor and provide informed consent to receive this vaccine.

We recommend you talk to your doctor about your options if you have any concerns.

## How do I get a vaccination?

### Talk to your facility or employer about dedicated vaccination clinics for workers

Every residential aged care worker will be offered a vaccination at their workplace. This may include through in-reach clinics delivered by Commonwealth vaccination providers, on site clinics conducted by their own employer or by visiting GPs.

In addition, dedicated vaccination hubs will be located near residential aged care facilities across Australia to provide further flexibility for workers to get vaccinated.

### Find a COVID-19 vaccination clinic near you via the online Eligibility Checker at [australia.gov.au](https://australia.gov.au)

Through the Eligibility Checker, you can find details and locations of the below vaccination locations:

- GP clinics that are providing Pfizer vaccines
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- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community Controlled Health Services
- state or territory-run mass vaccination clinics
- dedicated Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine hubs.

The online Eligibility Checker is updated regularly as more clinics become available.

### Call the dedicated COVID-19 Vaccine Helpline on 1800 020 080 (select option 4)

The Helpline can answer any questions you may have about vaccination and can help residential aged care workers book a vaccination appointment.

## How soon can I get vaccinated?

Residential aged care workers are a priority, which means when you book an appointment, your appointment will be scheduled as quickly as possible.

If you are arranging an appointment at a participating GP clinic, you can request a booking within 7 days.

## Is the vaccine safe and effective?

Yes. There are currently two COVID-19 vaccines available for use in Australia and both are effective in protecting you from serious illness or death from COVID-19.

Information about the [safety of COVID-19 vaccines](#) is available online in [many languages](#). Talk to your doctor or health practitioner about any concerns you may have about vaccination.

## Is the vaccine safe for women who are pregnant or breastfeeding?

Yes. On 9 June 2021, the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists and ATAGI released a joint statement recommending that pregnant women are routinely offered the Pfizer vaccine at any stage of pregnancy. Evidence shows the vaccine is safe for pregnant women and breastfeeding women.

Pregnant women are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, and their babies are at higher risk of being born prematurely.

COVID-19 vaccination may provide indirect protection to babies by transferring antibodies through the placenta (for pregnant women) or through breastmilk (for breastfeeding women).

Women who are trying to become pregnant do not need to delay vaccination or avoid becoming pregnant after vaccination.

Pregnant women are encouraged to discuss the timing of their vaccination, and their vaccination options, with their health professional.

More information is available on the [Department of Health's website](#).

## Are there enough Pfizer vaccines?

The Australian Government has purchased 40 million doses of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. Doses of the Pfizer vaccine are being prioritised for residential aged care workers.

## Can I get sick from vaccination?

Most vaccines have side effects and the COVID-19 vaccines are no different. It's important to note that everyone's immune system is unique.

Most side effects last no more than a couple of days and they go away without any problems.

Common reactions to vaccination include:

- pain, redness and/or swelling where you received the needle
- mild fever
- headache.

Some people will experience more significant flu-like symptoms from the vaccine compared to other common vaccinations and may need time away from normal activities. For the Pfizer vaccine, these symptoms are more common after the second dose.

## **If I get sick from the vaccine and can't work, what are my options?**

If you are a casual residential aged care worker, financial support is available if you need time to recover after your vaccination. Permanent and temporary employees can access your leave entitlements. Speak to your employer if you are unsure about what arrangements are in place.

Find out more on the [Department of Health's website](#).

## **Can I get paid time off work to get vaccinated?**

If you are a casual residential aged care worker, financial support is available if you need to go off-site to get vaccinated. Permanent and temporary employees can access your leave entitlements. Speak to your employer if you are unsure about what arrangements are in place. Find out more on the [Department of Health's website](#).

## **How many vaccine doses do I need?**

You need two doses of a Pfizer or AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine for optimum protection.

## **When and how do I get the second vaccine?**

At your first appointment, your vaccine provider will book you in to get your second COVID-19 vaccine dose.

## **What should I take to my appointment?**

Bring the following with you to your appointment:

- proof of identity, for example, your driver's licence, passport or birth certificate
- proof of employment –letter from your employer providing proof of employment, or, you can take a current work ID card or payslip
- your Medicare card, if you have one.

Ask your employer if you would like a letter demonstrating proof of employment. The Department of Health has prepared a letter template to help and it is available on our [website](#).

## **Why should I get vaccinated?**

Vaccination is the most effective way to protect against infectious diseases.

COVID-19 can spread quickly and widely. When enough people in the community are vaccinated, it slows down the spread of disease.

Vaccination prevents people from serious illness or death from COVID-19.

Higher vaccination rates make outbreaks much less likely, which reduces the need for things like border closures and travel restrictions.

When you get vaccinated, you are protecting yourself, the people you care for and support, and the whole community.

## Are COVID-19 vaccines effective?

Yes. Both the [Pfizer](#) and [AstraZeneca](#) vaccines are very effective at stopping people from becoming very sick if they catch COVID-19.

The vaccines have been thoroughly assessed by the [Therapeutic Goods Administration \(TGA\)](#) and found to be effective. Read more about the [approval of the vaccines](#).

Clinical trials of both vaccines also indicate their effectiveness is very good.

As other countries around the world progress with their rollouts, more and more data is becoming available that shows these vaccines are both highly effective when it comes to a real world situation.

For example, data from the [United Kingdom](#) shows that both these vaccines also significantly reduce severe COVID-19 in older adults.

This adds to the growing evidence that shows both the Pfizer and AstraZeneca vaccines are working and are highly effective in protecting people against severe illness, hospitalisation and death.

## My question isn't answered here – who can I talk to?

If you have questions about getting your COVID-19 vaccination, please call the dedicated COVID-19 Vaccine Helpline on 1800 020 080 and select option 4 at any time.

If you are concerned about vaccination, please talk to your doctor or health practitioner as soon as possible. Visit the [Department of Health's website](#) for more information, including translated information.

## Text message scripts

### Priority messages

Topic	Text
Vaccination is a requirement	From 17 Sep 2021, residential aged care workers will be required to have a COVID-19 vaccination. Find out more on the <a href="#">Department of Health website</a> .
Eligible for Pfizer	All residential aged care workers are eligible for a Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. Find out more <a href="#">Department of Health website</a> .

### Other suggested messages

Topic	Text
Vaccination is a requirement	From 17 Sep 2021, residential aged care workers will be required to have a COVID-19 vaccination. Talk to your facility or employer now about dedicated vaccination clinics for workers, or find a vaccination clinic near you via <a href="#">australia.gov.au</a> .
Definition	Residential aged care workers are required to get a COVID-19 vaccination. Not sure if this applies to you? Find out here <a href="#">Department of Health website</a> .
Eligibility	Residential aged care workers are eligible for a Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine. Talk to your facility or employer about dedicated vaccination clinics for workers or find a vaccination clinic near you via <a href="#">australia.gov.au</a> or call the dedicated COVID-19 Vaccine Helpline on 1800 020 080 and select option 4.
Priority	COVID-19 vaccination is a priority for residential aged care workers. Talk to your facility or employer about dedicated vaccination clinics for workers or find a vaccination clinic near you via <a href="#">australia.gov.au</a> or call the dedicated COVID-19 Vaccine Helpline on 1800 020 080 and select option 4..
Priority	Residential aged care workers are being prioritised in the Australian Government's COVID-19 Pfizer vaccine rollout. Talk to your facility or employer about dedicated vaccination clinics for workers or find a vaccination clinic near you via <a href="#">australia.gov.au</a> or call the dedicated COVID-19 Vaccine Helpline on 1800 020 080 and select option 4.
Don't wait, book now	Not yet vaccinated against COVID-19? Don't wait. Vaccination is one of the best ways you can protect yourself, your loved ones and the people you care for, from COVID-19 disease.

	Talk to your facility or employer about dedicated vaccination clinics for workers or find a vaccination clinic near you via <a href="https://australia.gov.au">australia.gov.au</a> or call the dedicated COVID-19 Vaccine Helpline on 1800 020 080 and select option 4.
Supply and availability	COVID-19 vaccine supply is increasing, and more appointments are available in more areas. Every residential aged care worker will have access to vaccination through their workplace, talk to your employer about dedicated vaccinations for workers. Find a vaccination clinic near you via <a href="https://australia.gov.au">australia.gov.au</a> or call the dedicated COVID-19 Vaccine Helpline on 1800 020 080 and select option 4.
Concerns/questions	If you have concerns about the COVID-19 vaccine, don't wait – talk to your doctor as soon as possible. Or, call the dedicated COVID-19 Vaccine Helpline on 1800 020 080 and select option 4 at any time.
Help	Residential aged care workers with questions about getting a Pfizer COVID-19 vaccination should call the dedicated COVID-19 Vaccine Helpline on 1800 020 080 and select option 4 at any time.
Help	Not sure how to get your Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine? Residential aged care workers should call the dedicated COVID-19 Vaccine Helpline on 1800 020 080 and select option 4.
In-reach teams	Additional dedicated COVID-19 vaccination clinics, including in-reach, will be available for residential aged care workers who are not yet vaccinated. Talk to your employer at the facility where you work to see if this is an option for you.
What to take to your appointment	Is your COVID-19 vaccine appointment coming up? Residential aged care workers need to take ID, proof of employment and your Medicare card if you have one.
Safe and effective	The Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine is safe and up to 95% effective after 2 doses. Residential aged care workers are eligible for a Pfizer vaccine. Talk to your facility or employer about dedicated vaccination clinics for workers or find a vaccination clinic near you via <a href="https://australia.gov.au">australia.gov.au</a> or call the dedicated COVID-19 Vaccine Helpline on 1800 020 080 and select option 4.
Support to get vaccinated	If you are a casual residential aged care worker, financial support may be available if you need to go off-site to get your COVID-19 vaccine or need time to recover after vaccination. Find out more on the <a href="https://www.health.gov.au">Department of Health's website</a>
Thank you	Thank you to everyone who has been vaccinated against COVID-19. You are protecting yourself, and helping to protect senior

	Australians, your co-workers, family and friends, and the community.
Encouragement	The COVID-19 situation in Australia is changing rapidly. New variants are more infectious and are a serious risk to vulnerable Australians and the community. If you haven't been vaccinated yet, it's important you don't wait – talk to your aged care facility or employer now.
Health benefits	COVID-19 vaccines protect people from serious disease or death. If you haven't been vaccinated yet, it's important not to wait – talk to your aged care facility or employer now.
Community benefits	COVID-19 vaccines protect you, the people you care for, and your community. If you haven't been vaccinated yet, it's important not to wait – talk to your aged care facility or employer now.
Co-worker benefits	COVID-19 vaccines protect you and your co-workers. If you haven't been vaccinated yet, it's important not to wait – talk to your aged care facility or employer now.