



COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout Primary Care Update

Update – 17 June 2021

Updated ATAGI advice on the AstraZeneca vaccine

The Australian Technical Advisory group on Immunisation (ATAGI) [has reviewed their advice on the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine](#). They recommend **Pfizer as the preferred vaccine for people aged under 60 years**.

This doesn't change who is currently eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine but it means Pfizer is now the preferred vaccine for people under 60 years.

The Chief Medical Officer wrote to all vaccination sites on 17 June 2021. A copy of the letter is attached (for your information only) and links to all relevant documents are provided below:

- [The Chief Medical Officer's statement](#).
- The new COVID-19 vaccination [consent form](#).
- A script to help receptionists and others when talking with patients (attached).
- A [frequently asked questions](#) (FAQ) document.

Updated decision-making guide for women who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or planning pregnancy

The Department has now updated the COVID-19 vaccination decision-making guide for women who are pregnant, breastfeeding, or planning pregnancy with information on Comirnaty (Pfizer).

We would appreciate your help in conveying the recommendations that:

- Pregnant women should be routinely offered Comirnaty at any stage of pregnancy.
- Women who are trying to become pregnant do not need to delay vaccination or avoid becoming pregnant after vaccination.
- Real-world evidence has shown that Comirnaty is safe for pregnant women and breastfeeding women.
- Pregnant women have a higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19.
- Their babies also have a 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).

This decision-making guide is now available on the Department's [website](#). (It will be further updated in coming days in line with ATAGI's recommendations from 17 June that Pfizer is the preferred vaccine for people aged under 60 years).

Factsheet on MBS Flag-Fall for Vaccine Suitability Assessment Services

From 14 June 2021, the Australian Government introduced MBS item 90005 to provide a call-out or "flag-fall" fee for general practitioners who conduct a COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment service in a:

- residential aged care facility (RACF)
- a residential disability facility setting, or
- at a patient's place of residence.

We appreciate your support in communicating the key information on this new MBS item if asked:

- MBS item 90005 provides a flag-fall fee for an **initial COVID-19 vaccine related** attendance at a RACF, residential disability facility setting or a patient's place of residence, on one occasion, applicable **only to the first patient seen**.
- The item must be billed in association with a COVID-19 vaccine suitability assessment service (MBS items 93624 to 93656 inclusive).
- The MBS fee for the flag-fall item is \$66.75
- The MBS rebate paid for the item is \$56.75.

Please note: Due to time constraints, it has not been possible to amend the legislation that establishes 100% rebates for GPs and Other Medical Practitioners. The rebate for the flag-fall items is therefore paid at 85% of the item fee. The fee amount has been increased so that the Medicare rebate paid for the flag-fall is at the same level as the equivalent rebate for the GP RACF flag-fall (MBS item 90001).

Further information is provided in the [Fact Sheet on the MBS Flag-Fall for Vaccine Suitability Assessment Services](#).

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse GP Webinar

On Friday, 18 June, 11am – 12pm (AEST), the Department will be hosting a COVID-19 vaccine update for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse GPs.

The webinar will have live captioning and be available to view on-demand via the same link within a few hours of the live stream.

To join the call, please use the following link: <https://publish.viostream.com/app/s-dgs4fw4>

We encourage you to share this invitation with your colleagues and get involved by contributing your questions and comments.

FOR YOUR INFORMATION ONLY

Ongoing expansion of General Practice participation in the Roll-out

General practices to begin administering Pfizer from 5 July 2021

Approximately 1,300 participating general practices will be transitioned during July to administer the Pfizer vaccine in addition to the AstraZeneca Vaccine.

The first 500 general practices were invited via the PHNs to begin administering the Pfizer vaccine in the week of 5 July 2021. The next 800 practices will be finalised and advised in coming days.

All remaining participating practices are expected to transition to Pfizer later in the year as more Pfizer vaccine becomes available.

Targeted Expression of Interest (EOI) for general practices to deliver the AstraZeneca vaccine

An additional EOI for new practices to join the program (administering AstraZeneca) was conducted in late May/early June. Almost 900 general practices applied with the majority of practices found eligible to participate (held valid and current accreditation, were in the process of obtaining accreditation and/or administer vaccinations as part of the National Immunisation Program). Approximately 840 will commence in the program from the weeks commencing 21 and 28 June 2021 (week 18 and 19 of the roll-out), bringing the total number of general practices participating in the program to more than 5,200.

AstraZeneca allocations increased

The Government has further increased AstraZeneca dose allocations to general practices across the country. On 12 June 2021, approximately 4,000 low and medium allocation practices have had their dose allocations increased to a maximum of 400 doses per week, and approximately 300 high allocation general practices have had their dose allocations increased to a maximum of 600 doses per week.

On-boarding community pharmacy

To complement existing primary care vaccination sites, National Cabinet has agreed that states have flexibility to introduce community pharmacy to support AstraZeneca vaccination in regional, rural, and remote areas (Modified Monash Model 2 to 7).

Community pharmacies are being on-boarded in a staged approach across jurisdictions in the next few weeks, following the successful on-boarding in Queensland.

Forty-nine community pharmacies have begun administering the AstraZeneca vaccine in Queensland, with additional community pharmacies planned to commence vaccinations in the Northern Territory and Western Australia from 12 July, and in Victoria, New South Wales, and South Australia on 19 July.

It is anticipated that, from mid-July, nearly 300 Community Pharmacies will commence administering the AstraZeneca vaccine in their communities.