



COVID-19 Vaccine Rollout Primary Care Update

Update – 20 October 2021

Medical Exemptions

We have been advised of a number of occasions where GPs are providing bulk medical exemptions for patients and we would appreciate your assistance in reminding vaccination providers that whilst medical contraindications can be reported to AIR as a medical exemption for receiving a full course of COVID-19 vaccines, there are **very few situations** where a vaccine is contraindicated and, as such, **medical exemption is expected to be rarely required.**

Accepted medical contraindications include:

- Anaphylaxis to any component of the vaccine, including Polyethylene Glycol (PEG); and
- Serious adverse event attributed to a previous dose of a COVID-19 vaccine (and without another cause identified) that has been determined following review by, and/or on the opinion of, an experienced immunisation provider/medical specialist taking into account whether the repeat vaccine doses would be associated with a risk of recurrence of the serious adverse event.

Temporary medical exemptions may be considered for those:

- With a PCR-confirmed history of SARS-CoV-2 infection in the last 6 months; or
- Recent or complex cardiac illness.

Permanent and temporary contraindications **should only be reported for individuals where there is no suitable alternative COVID-19 vaccine available.**

ATAGI have developed supporting clinical guidance for reporting medical contraindications for COVID-19 vaccines. In line with ATAGI guidance, vaccination providers are no longer able to report a medical contraindication to a COVID-19 vaccine for pregnancy in the AIR.

More information can be found on the Department's [website](#).

Inappropriate or False Medical Exemptions

The Department and the National COVID Vaccine Taskforce (NCVTF) take allegations of Medicare non-compliance by health care providers very seriously and all tip-offs will be reviewed in accordance with the Department's compliance assessment procedures. The Department and NCVTF may pursue a range of responses including education, review, audit and investigation into breaches of Australian laws.

The NCVTF are actively monitoring all COVID-19 data (including exemptions) and if outliers are identified, the NCVTF will look to refer these Practices or Practitioners to the relevant health regulatory body or law enforcement for appropriate action.

The Department is working with Services Australia on enhancements to the AIR that will allow individuals with a valid medical contraindication to COVID-19 vaccines to generate a COVID-19 Digital Certificate.

In the meantime, individuals who have a medical contraindication reported for COVID-19 vaccines can use their Immunisation History Statement (IHS) as vaccination evidence. The IHS displays all vaccinations, or medical contraindications, that have been reported to the AIR.

We would appreciate your support in sharing this reminder through your networks and encouraging all vaccination providers to only report valid and clinically appropriate medical contraindications, as well as reminding them of the implications of fraudulent registrations of exemptions.

Administering booster shots

Please help us by reminding vaccination providers that booster shots should not be administered until regulatory authority and medical advice has been received.

On 8 October 2021, the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) released [advice](#) recommending a third dose of COVID-19 vaccine as part of the primary course in individuals who are severely immunocompromised.

This advice is separate from 'booster' shots. The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has not yet authorised boosters for any COVID-19 vaccine.

In addition, ATAGI is anticipated to provide further advice on booster doses shortly, which is expected to include proposed populations and the timing schedule for the booster to be administered following the completion of the primary vaccination course.

Until regulatory authority is received and medical advice has been considered, the National COVID-19 Vaccine Program **does not contain a booster vaccine.**

We would appreciate your support by sharing this reminder through your networks to help ensure booster doses are not administered outside of program guidelines.

Vaccine Clinic Finder updates

Following the ATAGI [statement](#) on 8 October, a third dose of a COVID-19 vaccine for people who are severely immunocompromised is recommended. We encourage people needing a third dose to contact a healthcare professional for advice (this reference has been included on the [Vaccine Clinic Finder](#), Search Results section).

The Vaccine Clinic Finder (VCF) includes translations in 15 languages aligned with the recently updated advice, ensuring as many people as possible have access to up-to-date information. The COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic Finder is the best way to book a vaccination. People can find a clinic that suits their needs by answering some simple questions. They can book for themselves, their children, or someone else (with their permission).

We would appreciate your support by sharing this reminder about the Vaccine Clinic Finder amongst your networks.

National Coronavirus Helpline – service for multilingual callers

Multilingual callers are able to contact Translating and Interpreting Services (TIS National) on 131 450, with priority connection through to the National Coronavirus Helpline. The service supports people with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to access relevant information or obtain assistance with finding vaccine appointments. Call takers provide COVID-19 information and support callers to book their vaccination appointment by providing step by step assistance.

We would appreciate your support by sharing this reminder about the National Coronavirus Helpline amongst your networks.

Vaccine Clinical Finder Connect pilot

FOR YOUR INFORMATION ONLY

On Friday 15 October a selection of vaccine providers in South Australia were invited to participate in a pilot to use the new digital service - Vaccine Clinic Finder Connect (VCF Connect). The service is designed by the Department of Health in partnership with the Australian Digital Health Agency and Healthdirect Australia to enable clinics to self-manage their COVID-19 vaccination services published on the Vaccine Clinic Finder.

VCF Connect provides clinics an easier and quicker way to make updates to their vaccination service information. The pilot participants received a registration email, then in a few simple steps were able to make updates to their details published on VCF such as opening hours, website address and additional information. Initial indications are encouraging that this will be of great benefit to vaccine providers in communicating changes to their services, as our first pilot participants were able to see their updates published to VCF within a matter of hours.

The pilot will run for approximately four weeks to ensure VCF Connect is working as intended and to incorporate feedback from pilot participants. We will then work closely with peak organisations to support the roll out to all vaccination providers. We will continue to keep you informed as the pilot progresses, but if you have questions in the meantime please email digital.CV19@Health.gov.au.