

COVID-19 vaccination information

Patient information



COVID-19

Coronavirus (COVID-19) can cause serious ongoing health issues, and sometimes death. It is still a new virus and as such we are still learning more about it.

COVID-19 vaccination

Having a COVID-19 vaccine is an important step to take to reduce the serious effects of COVID-19 in people who become infected with the virus. Current evidence shows that people who have received a COVID-19 vaccine have a much lower chance of developing more serious disease from COVID-19 compared to those who did not get the vaccine. Even though the COVID-19 vaccine has been shown to be very effective there is still a chance you may get COVID-19.

Queensland has two COVID-19 vaccines available – the Pfizer vaccine (also known as Comirnaty) and the AstraZeneca vaccine.

Both vaccines are designed to promote our immune system to make antibodies to the spike protein of the virus. This means if you were to ever get the COVID-19 virus, your body is better prepared to fight the illness and reduce its severity.

Importantly, even after vaccination, Queenslanders will still be encouraged to wash their hands regularly and maintain physical distance to help protect yourself and others.

How is the COVID-19 vaccine given?

The vaccine is given via an injection into your upper arm by a health professional who has been trained in giving the COVID-19 vaccine. You must remain in the vaccination clinic for observation for at least 15 minutes after vaccination. Depending on your medical history, you may be asked to wait in the clinic for 30 minutes. To get the full benefit of the vaccine you will need two injections, several weeks apart.

Who can get the COVID-19 vaccine?

The Pfizer vaccine is suitable for people aged 16 years and older and preferred in those under 50 years.

The AstraZeneca vaccine is suitable for people aged 18 years and older and preferred in those over 50 years.

This recommendation is based on the increasing risk of serious effects of COVID-19 in older adults (and hence a higher benefit from vaccination) and a potentially increased risk of thrombosis (blood clots) with thrombocytopenia (low blood platelet count) following AstraZeneca vaccine in those under 50 years.

The AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine can be used in adults aged under 50 years where the benefits clearly outweigh the risk for that individual and the person has made an informed decision based on an understanding of the risks and benefits.

For more information on the safety of these vaccines, please see the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) statement released 8 April 2021 (www.health.gov.au/news/atagi-statement-on-astrazeneca-vaccine-in-response-to-new-vaccine-safety-concerns).

Who should not get the COVID-19 vaccine?

You must not get a COVID-19 vaccine if you have had any of the following:

- anaphylaxis (a severe allergic reaction) to a previous dose of the same COVID-19 vaccine
- anaphylaxis after exposure to any ingredient of the COVID-19 vaccine*.

If you have ever had an allergic reaction or anaphylaxis to anything else, including after receiving a vaccine, you can still get the vaccine, but you must tell the immunisation provider beforehand.

If you have recently had any other vaccine (e.g. flu vaccine) you should wait at least 14 days to have the COVID-19 vaccine.

If you have had thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS) following a first dose of vaccine (only reported following first dose AstraZeneca vaccine), Heparin induced thrombocytopenia (HIT), Central venous sinus thrombosis (CVST) or splanchnic vein thrombosis (SVT) you should not be given the AstraZeneca vaccine. You will be offered an alternative vaccine (currently the Pfizer vaccine but others may become available). Further information on the AstraZeneca vaccine can be found here: www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/covid-19-vaccination-information-on-covid-19-astrazeneca-vaccine.

***Pfizer-Comirnaty BNT162b2 [mRNA] COVID-19 Vaccine includes the following ingredients:** mRNA, ((4-hydroxybutyl)azanediyl)bis(hexane-6,1-diyl)bis(2-hexyldecanoate) (ALC-0315), 2-[(polyethylene glycol)-2000]-N,N-ditetradecylacetamide (ALC-0159), distearoylphosphatidylcholine (DSPC), cholesterol, potassium chloride, monobasic potassium phosphate, sodium chloride, dibasic sodium phosphate dihydrate and sucrose.

***AstraZeneca (ChAdOx1-S) COVID-19 Vaccine includes the following ingredients:** chAdOx1-S, disodium edetate, ethanol absolute, histidine hydrochloride monohydrate, histidine, magnesium chloride hexahydrate, polysorbate 80, sodium chloride and sucrose.

Is the COVID-19 vaccine safe for pregnant and breastfeeding women?

At this stage, COVID-19 vaccines are not routinely recommended to be given during pregnancy as there is limited experience with the use of COVID-19 vaccines in pregnant women. As we learn more about the vaccines, this advice may change. If you are pregnant, think you may be pregnant or are planning to have a baby, ask your doctor or pharmacist for advice before you consider receiving this vaccine.

If you are breastfeeding you can receive a COVID-19 vaccine at any time. You do not need to stop breastfeeding before or after vaccination.

What to expect after your vaccination

All medicines and vaccines can cause side effects and most of these are minor effects. However, if you do experience any side effects following vaccination and are worried, contact your GP.

Common side effects

Pfizer	Injection site pain/swelling, tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, fever, joint pain.
AstraZeneca	Injection site tenderness/pain/warmth/itching, generally feeling unwell, tiredness, headache, chills or feeling feverish, joint pain or muscle pain, feeling sick (nausea).

Less common side effects

Pfizer	Injection site redness/itching, nausea, enlarged lymph nodes, feeling unwell, pain in the limb, insomnia.
AstraZeneca	Fever, swelling or redness at the injection site.

These side effects are usually mild and usually go away within one or two days. If you experience pain at the injection site or fever, headaches or body aches after vaccination, you can take paracetamol or ibuprofen. These help reduce the above symptoms (you do not need to take paracetamol or ibuprofen before vaccination). If there is swelling at the injection site, you can use a cold compress.

Rare side effects

Pfizer	Severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis), temporary one-sided facial drooping (also called Bell's palsy).
AstraZeneca	Severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis), thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS) – a rare and new syndrome which involves blood clots (occurring in body sites like the brain or abdomen) together with low platelet levels.

More information about what to expect after your AstraZeneca vaccine can be found here:

www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/covid-19-vaccination-after-your-astrazeneca-vaccine.

After you have left the vaccination location, seek medical attention if:

- You think you are having an allergic reaction. Call 000 if you experience severe symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, wheezing, a fast heartbeat or collapsing.
- You are worried about a potential side effect or have new or unexpected symptoms.
- You have an expected side effect of the vaccine which has not gone away after a few days.

COVID-19 testing after vaccination

Some side effects from COVID-19 vaccination might be similar to symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g. fever). Both COVID-19 vaccines do not contain any live virus and cannot cause COVID-19. You do not need to get a COVID-19 test or isolate if you develop general symptoms like fever, headache or tiredness in the first two days after vaccination or if you are sure that you don't have any respiratory symptoms (e.g. runny nose, cough, sore throat, loss of smell or loss of taste).

Where can I get more information or ask questions?

Call 134 COVID (13 42 68) 24 hours, 7 days a week for information on the vaccine or assistance with vaccination bookings or appointment enquiries. You can also ask for an interpreter – it is free.

Stay informed at www.health.gov.au and www.qld.gov.au/covid19vaccine.

Privacy notice: Personal information collected by Queensland Health and the Hospital and Health Services (collectively Queensland Health) is handled in accordance with the *Information Privacy Act 2009*. Queensland Health is collecting your personal information including your name, address, phone number, email address, age, gender, Indigenous status, vaccine details and Medicare number in accordance with *Australian Immunisation Register Act 2015* in order to manage recall, reminders, clinical follow up; or control and enhanced safety monitoring of vaccines. This information will be given to the Australian Immunisation Register for the purpose of maintaining information about vaccinations of individuals. Your personal information will also be used to administer the Queensland Health COVID-19 immunisation program ('Program'). Your relevant medical information including existence of any medical conditions, allergies, or severe reactions following any vaccine will be collected for the assessment of whether and which vaccine you should be administered. If you choose not to provide the information it may affect Queensland Health's ability to respond and deliver services to you, including administering the COVID-19 vaccine to you. All personal information will be securely stored and only accessible by appropriately authorised officers within the Queensland Health. Your de-identified data (information that will not identify you) will be shared with Commonwealth Government and national immunisation safety, monitoring and surveillance organisations for the purpose of monitoring adverse events following immunisation and evaluating disease prevention and control (immunisation) efforts. Your personal information will not be disclosed to other third parties without consent, unless the disclosure is authorised or required by or under law. For information about how Queensland Health protects your personal information, or to learn about your right to access your own personal information, please see our website at www.health.qld.gov.au/global/privacy and www.health.qld.gov.au/system-governance/contact-us/access-info/privacy-contacts.