



# COVID-19 vaccines

Special Bulletin – 30 July 2021

Information for COVID-19 vaccine providers

**OFFICIAL**

**This is a special bulletin for health professionals and services, and subscribers to the weekly newsletter for COVID-19 vaccine providers.**

## Key points

1. The minimum interval for Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine is changing to six weeks between first dose and second dose.
2. The change to timing between Pfizer vaccine doses will allow more Victorians to receive their first dose of COVID-19 vaccine in coming weeks.
3. This change has been implemented considering the epidemiological conditions, constrained Pfizer vaccine supply, and the benefit of providing more people with a level of protection against COVID-19. The change in the minimum interval remains consistent with ATAGI advice on the spacing of vaccine doses.
4. This change only applies to Victorian vaccination centres, including efforts by Local Public Health Units and state commissioned community health services delivering COVID-19 vaccination.
5. Commonwealth commissioned services including general practices and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations services are not required to follow this advice.
6. New service delivery options are being put in place to reduce barriers to vaccination for those priority workforce groups and people who are most at risk of catching or getting very sick from COVID-19. These services are being provided to those who may have barriers to access vaccination centres. Services including a trial of taxi vouchers, group bookings at vaccination centres, and mobile in reach services.
7. There have been further details released regarding classification of nurse immunisers.

## Pfizer minimum interval extended to six weeks

- As of Monday 2 August, state-run vaccination centres will administer the second dose of Pfizer vaccine at least six weeks after the first dose.
- A six week minimum interval means more Victorians can receive their first dose of the Pfizer vaccine, providing protection against hospitalisation and severe disease.
- This change is consistent with the [Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation Clinical Guidelines](#).
- The following people will continue to be provided second doses at a three-week interval:
  - hotel quarantine and border workers
  - frontline healthcare workers that work at COVID streaming hospitals that are required to be fully vaccinated (workers should book directly with the relevant vaccination service at a health service/hospital)

- correctional facilities clients/workers being served by in-reach vaccination service providers.
- The Coronavirus Hotline and the online booking portal will be updated to reflect the revised minimum Pfizer interval. State vaccination centres that are not using the CVMS platform should ensure that systems and arrangements reflect the new minimum interval for Pfizer.
- The minimum interval will be managed at the point of booking, not at presentation for vaccination. Health services should not turn away individuals with a valid booking.
- Pfizer intervals of varying lengths have been used in a range of countries including the United Kingdom. Real world efficacy estimates from these settings have confirmed that two doses of Pfizer provides strong protection against infection, severe disease and hospitalisation.

## Existing appointments

- People who already have their second Pfizer dose appointment booked, can attend their appointment as planned.
- Appointments should not be rescheduled.
- Even if the second dose of Pfizer is administered later than the recommended interval, no further doses are required.

## Increasing access to COVID-19 vaccines

Over Quarter three, the Department and state-run vaccination services will focus on engagement and participation among priority cohorts, including via mobile and outreach models.

### Reserved first dose appointments

Access to reserved first dose appointments at vaccination centres has been expanded.

The following people can access reserved Pfizer appointment regardless of their age:

- Meat and seafood processing worker and associated cold chain transportation
- People who are vulnerable and at high risk from COVID-19, including residents of high risk accommodation

To help people who are at higher risk of contracting or getting very sick from COVID-19 get vaccinated, appointments are being reserved at vaccination centres. To book a reserved appointment call the Coronavirus Hotline on 1800 675 398.

The following people are already able to access a reserved Pfizer appointment regardless of their age:

- All health care workers
- Public and private residential aged care and disability care workers and residents
- Hotel quarantine and border workers
- Household contacts of hotel quarantine and border workers

### Group bookings and mobile in reach

Two new services will be available to support people who are currently eligible to get vaccinated.

To remove barriers to accessing vaccination centres an online form is being launched. The form will allow groups or organisations of eligible individuals to request assistance in order to access COVID-19 vaccines.

- Completed request forms will be sent to Local Public Health Units who will assess the request (including considering the priority of the group and the size of the group) and evaluate if a group booking at a vaccination or mobile in reach service is most appropriate.
- The Local Public Health Unit work with the requesting group or organisation to arrange the group booking or mobile in reach service.
- COVID-19 vaccines delivered through this service will be age appropriate:
  - Those aged under 60 years will receive Pfizer
  - Those aged 60 years and over will receive AstraZeneca
  - Some people are eligible to receive Pfizer regardless of their age.

### Taxi vouchers trial

- Funded taxi travel to vaccine appointments at vaccination centres will be available to anyone who receives a Government [benefit through Centrelink](#) (except the Family Tax Benefit).
- Providing funded taxi travel to and from vaccination appointments will help to remove travel costs as a barrier to vaccination. This is a trial service for both first and second dose appointments.
- People can access this service by calling the Victorian Coronavirus Hotline on 1800 675 398.
- The taxi booking will be made at point of vaccination booking, and the individual will be provided with a return trip ID so they can book their paid return trip following their vaccination.

State vaccination centres can cite a signed Eligibility Declaration Form and must have printed copies available for signature to proceed with vaccination. These processes aim to ensure that eligible individuals that have booked an appointment and supply a form of evidence are vaccinated at state vaccination centres.

## Second dose appointment reminders

In August the Victorian online booking system will send reminders via SMS and email to people to encourage them to book their second vaccine dose. The schedule of reminders is informed by the dose two intervals and when an individual may be overdue. People will be able to unsubscribe from reminders.

## Classification of nurse immunisers

- Inconsistent approaches to classification of nurse immuniser staff may impact pay classifications, supervision requirements, and desirability for staff to participate in the COVID-19 vaccination program.
- The [Victorian COVID-19 Vaccination Guidelines](#) provide information on the roles and responsibilities of emergency authorised vaccination workforces and supervision requirements required for these workforces.
- Supervising authorised immunisers are expected to provide clinical supervision to a maximum of 10 emergency-authorised immunisers, ensuring the vaccination clinic can continue to operate in parallel to any responses to AEFI.
- The guidelines recommend that supervising authorised immunisers have the relevant skills and experience (preferably a minimum of six (6) months experience and current/recently completed anaphylaxis management and basic first aid) to perform supervision roles.
- Before allocating nurse immunisers to supervisory roles, clinical leads at vaccination sites should consider the suitability of nurse immunisers to perform supervision. This could take into account:

- Experience as an immuniser
  - Recency of training
  - Experience in supervision or mentoring of other health professionals.
- A skills and competency assessment by vaccination site clinical leads may also be appropriate to assess the suitability for nurse immunisers to perform supervision roles.
  - The recommendation of nurse immunisers is that those performing a supervisory role be classified as a Registered Nurse Grade 3B according to the Nurses and Midwives (Victorian Public Sector) (Single Interest Employers) Enterprise Agreement 2016-2020.
  - Nurse immunisers whose experience or recency of training deem that they are not suitable to perform a supervisory role in the COVID-19 vaccination program are recommended to be classified as a Registered Nurse Grade 2 as per the same Agreement. This classification would also apply to nurse immunisers who are not required to supervise other staff during their shift.
  - Classification of nurse immunisers remains at the discretion of the employing health service and may change as experience and duties within the vaccination program change.

## More information and resources

### Victorian Government

- [Victorian COVID-19 Vaccination Guidelines](#)
- [Eligibility guidance for state vaccine centres](#)
- [Evidence for eligibility](#)

## Contact us

For more information on the COVID-19 vaccination program in Victoria, contact the Victorian Department of Health by emailing [COVIDvaccination@health.vic.gov.au](mailto:COVIDvaccination@health.vic.gov.au).

## In case you missed it

For previous updates, please click the button to view the last **Department of Health special bulletin** distributed on [25 July 2021](#).