

Covid-19 Vaccine Information



What type of vaccines will I be getting?

The available vaccine uses a chemically weakened, harmless virus (the common cold virus), to carry the genetic code for a protein from the Covid-19 virus. Immunity occurs after the vaccine stimulates a person's immune system to make antibodies to help protect the body from future infections. It has been given to over 50 million people world-wide.

What are the common side-effects of the vaccines?

Some people will develop short-term, mild side effects after being vaccinated. These include injection site reactions, such as local pain, redness and swelling. Other side effects include fever, joint pain, muscle aches, headache, general unwellness and tiredness.

These common side effects indicate the start of an immune response, which helps prevent people from getting COVID-19. Side effects do not usually require any treatment, other than paracetamol for fever or discomfort.

Allergic reactions to vaccines are rare.

Some people may have allergic reactions to a substance called – Polyethylene Glycol (PEG), an ingredient found in tablets, laxatives, cosmetics and bath products. The available vaccine contains Polysorbate 80 which is related to PEG, however initial data from over 1 million doses in the UK has not shown any cases of anaphylaxis.

What happens if I have a reaction to the vaccine?

The vaccines require a second dose to achieve long-term protection from COVID-19.

- If you have a non-allergic reaction (side effect) to the first dose you can still receive a second dose. These reactions include those listed above in the common side-effect section, fainting and skin reactions other than hives
- If you have a mild or moderate reaction such as a skin reaction like hives [urticaria], you should receive the second dose, but with a longer observation period of at least 30 minutes

Are COVID-19 vaccines safe for those with allergies?

There is no indication that people with conditions such as asthma, hay fever, food allergy or insect stinging allergy have any greater risk of allergy than the general populations.

Unlike some other vaccines there is no food, gelatin or latex in the COVID-19 vaccines currently available, and they are not grown in eggs. An allergic reaction to another vaccine does not mean you will also be allergic to the COVID-19 vaccine. If you have had a previous anaphylaxis to multiple medications you should see an allergy specialist first to assess and confirm your allergy.

Are COVID-19 vaccines safe for those with immunodeficiencies or autoimmune conditions?

COVID-19 vaccines are safe for people with primary and secondary immunodeficiencies and autoimmune conditions who are not otherwise considered to be at greater risk of vaccine allergy already. In fact people with certain pre-existing medical conditions have been identified as some of the first to be vaccinated in the initial priority groups due to higher risks associated with contracting the COVID-19 illness.

Can I have the vaccine at the same time as the flu vaccine?

It is not recommended to have the flu vaccine and a COVID-19 vaccine on the same day. It is preferred that the minimum interval between a dose of flu vaccine and a dose of COVID-19 vaccine is 2 weeks.

Who shouldn't have the vaccine at this stage?

Routine use of COVID-19 vaccines during pregnancy and breastfeeding is not recommended.

>> **New advice:** It is now suggested if your risk of developing Covid is low and you are under the age of 50 you should consider waiting for an alternative vaccine such as the Pfizer vaccine. This is due to the very rare but serious complication of clotting in the brain or abdomen. Discuss this with your doctor if you need further information before making a decision.

Patients in the current phase 1b eligibility group include:

- Elderly adults 70 years and older
- Health care workers
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 55 years and older
- Younger adults with an underlying medical condition, including those with a disability
- Critical and high-risk workers including defence, police, fire, emergency services and meat processing

You can book your vaccine appointment in one of the following ways:

1. Book online www.tsmp.net
2. Download the [AMS Connect App](#) from your app store, or
3. Call our vaccination booking number 4426 3634

References:

1. National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance <https://www.ncirs.org.au/public/covid-19-vaccines>
2. Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy <https://www.allergy.org.au/patients/covid-19>
3. Australian Government Department of Health <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines>
4. World Health Organization <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/covid-19-vaccines>

