

Youth COVID-19 Vaccination Program

Information for parents, caregivers and students

Vaccination against COVID-19 is the most effective way to reduce severe illness, hospitalisation and death from infection. As part of the national COVID-19 vaccination rollout, from September 2021, all children 12 years of age and older are eligible to receive vaccination against COVID-19.

COVID-19 infection and adolescents

COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2) can be a serious illness for anyone who gets it, including people who are young, fit and otherwise healthy. As with other respiratory illnesses, some people infected with coronavirus disease may experience mild symptoms and will recover easily, and in others it can cause very serious disease, long term health issues, and death.

New variants or strains of the COVID 19 virus can spread more easily across all age groups and can increase the risk of developing COVID 19. Australia, like many other countries across the world, has seen higher numbers of adolescents and children becoming infected, particularly from the Delta variant. Adolescents and adults now have similar rates of infection

COVID-19 vaccination and children/adolescents

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has approved the use of the Comirnaty™ (Pfizer) and Spikevax™ (Moderna) mRNA COVID-19 vaccines from the age of 12 years of age and above. The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) has reviewed available information on the safety and efficacy of both these vaccines in children aged 12 years and above, as well as the risk of getting infected COVID-19 in this age group, and evidence of wider benefits and risks of vaccinating children; and it is recommending offering COVID-19 vaccine to all children in this age group.

There is growing evidence that vaccinated people are less infectious if they do catch COVID-19, which means getting vaccinated is the best way you can protect yourself, your loved ones and the community.

The Comirnaty™ (Pfizer) COVID-19 vaccine

Comirnaty (Pfizer Australia Pty Ltd) is a vaccine that can prevent people from becoming ill from COVID-19. Comirnaty does not contain any live virus, and it cannot give you COVID-19. It contains the genetic code for an important part of the COVID-19 virus called the spike protein. After getting the vaccine, your body makes copies of the spike protein. Your immune system will then learn to recognise and fight the COVID-19 virus. The genetic code is then broken down quickly by the body.

For more information on the Comirnaty vaccine can be found at [About the Pfizer \(Comirnaty\) COVID-19 vaccine](#)

Benefits of the vaccine

People who have had two doses of Comirnaty are about 95 per cent less likely to get symptoms of COVID-19 than people who did not get the vaccine. Protection against COVID-19 starts from about 2–3 weeks after the first dose. While one dose may give some protection, it may not be long lasting. Two doses will give optimal protection. No vaccine is 100% effective, so it is possible that you can still get sick from COVID-19 after vaccination.

Even if you have been vaccinated with two doses of Comirnaty, you should still get a COVID-19 test if you have symptoms (e.g. fever, cough, sore throat).

Common vaccine reactions

- > injection site pain, swelling and redness
- > fatigue
- > headache
- > myalgia (sore muscles) and chills
- > arthralgia (sore joints)
- > fever (more common after second dose) and injection site swelling
- > nausea

Rare reactions

A rare risk of myocarditis (inflammation of the heart) and pericarditis (inflammation of the membrane around the heart) has been observed in people who have received mRNA COVID-19 vaccines. It is more common in younger males and more commonly after the second dose, however, it is an extremely rare side effect. Most cases do not last long; some cases require treatment in hospital.

Myocarditis and pericarditis are much more common with COVID-19 infection and damage to the heart is frequently severe after infection. Myocarditis and pericarditis can also occur due to other causes, including common viral infections.

Symptoms usually appear within 10 (usually 1-5) days after vaccination and can include:

- > chest pain
- > palpitations (irregular heartbeat)
- > fainting
- > shortness of breath

People who experience any of these symptoms after having an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine should seek medical attention.

ATAGI and the Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand (CSANZ) emphasise that the overwhelming benefits of vaccination in protecting against COVID-19 greatly outweigh the rare risk of these conditions. Most pre-existing cardiac conditions are not regarded as contraindications to vaccination.

Students with a history of cardiac (heart) conditions should consult their GP or cardiologist about the best timing of vaccination and whether any additional precautions are recommended:

More information is available at on the Department of Health website. Search:

[Guidance on Myocarditis and Pericarditis after mRNA COVID-19 Vaccines](#)

Reporting vaccine reactions

All serious or unexpected reactions should be reported to the SA Health COVID-19 Clinical Advisory Service.

- > **Online:** Use the online [Vaccine Reaction Report Form](#).
- > **Telephone:** COVID-19 Clinical Advisory Service; Immunisation Section, Communicable Disease Control Branch between 8.30 am – 5.00 pm Monday to Friday on [1300 232 272](#). Serious adverse reactions related to COVID vaccines can also be reported on this number outside of business hours.

Further information

SA Health

- > sahealth.sa.gov.au/covidvaccine
- > SA COVID-19 Information Line – 1800 253 787

Australian Government Department of Health

- > health.gov.au/resources/publications/covid-19-vaccine-information-for-teens-and-parentsguardians
- > health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines
- > health.gov.au/resources/publications/how-to-speak-to-kids-about-covid-19-vaccines
- > tga.gov.au/covid-19-vaccines
- > National Coronavirus Helpline – 1800 020 080