

Information sheet for health professionals

Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine approval

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has [provisionally approved](#) the [Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine](#) for use in Australia.

The first priority groups in Australia will start receiving a vaccine in February.

This registration means Pfizer's vaccine has met the [TGA's rigorous standards](#) for safety, quality and efficacy, and will be provided for free to all Australian residents.

It has been provisionally approved in Australia for people 16 years of age and over.

Two doses will be required, administered at least 21 days apart.

The approval is subject to strict conditions, and Pfizer will be required to continue providing information to the TGA on the safety, efficacy and quality of the vaccine.

Priority groups such as aged care and disability care residents and workers, frontline health care workers, and quarantine and border workers will be the first to receive a COVID-19 vaccine.

The Pfizer vaccine will be delivered at up to 50 hospital sites across Australia, and in residential aged care and disability care facilities.

The [National Rollout Strategy](#) details how the vaccine will be distributed more widely over coming months through over 1,000 distribution sites.

The next steps in the process will include batch testing these newly arrived doses, establishing cold storage facilities for the vaccine, training health providers to administer it, and finalising distribution sites.

This Australian Government has several [agreements for the supply of COVID-19 vaccines](#) in place, including those produced by AstraZeneca and Novavax.

For more information visit the [Department of Health website](#).

Primary care participation in Phase 1b – expressions of interest from general practices

General practices are a critical partner in achieving this goal by providing comprehensive immunisation coverage for their local populations.

All accredited general practices are invited to submit an [expression of interest \(EOI\)](#) to participate in Phase 1b of the national roll-out strategy, planned to commence in March 2021.

This EOI is intended to identify individual general practices capable of participating from Phase 1b of the roll-out to commence from March 2021. An EOI should be completed for each individual practice location.

General practices who do not participate in this phase can still be involved in later phases of the vaccine roll-out. All general practices who meet requirements will have the opportunity to participate in the vaccine roll-out as more vaccines become available.

General Practitioner led Respiratory Clinics and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services do not need to apply through this EOI and will be supported to participate through a separate process.

Responses to the EOI should be submitted online via the [EOI response form](#).

The EOI portal will:

- open at 09:00 AEDT on 23 January 2021
- close at 23:59 AWST on 1 February 2021.

Respondents will receive a confirmation of EOI submission and will be notified of the outcome of their application as soon as possible.

For more information read the [EOI for primary care participation in Phase 1b](#) of the COVID-19 vaccine roll-out.

Surge vaccination workforce

The [Australian Government has announced](#) the four providers to provide a vaccine workforce to supplement the existing immunisation workforce for priority groups including residential aged care, residential disability, and carers.

The providers are Aspen Medical, Healthcare Australia, International SOS, and Sonic Clinical Services.

These providers have established their capability and capacity to provide a skilled workforce, particularly for some of the most vulnerable groups throughout each state and territory.

This vaccine workforce will support the jurisdictions for their part in the vaccine rollout if required. They may assist peak organisations and other providers to administer the vaccine for harder-to-reach populations, such as remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

COVID-19 vaccine training program

In preparation for Australia's vaccine rollout, authorised immunisation providers must complete COVID-19 vaccination training to ensure competency standards are met to administer COVID-19 vaccines.

The Australian Government has partnered with the Australian College of Nursing to develop and deliver free and accredited training modules for individuals involved in the administration of COVID-19 vaccines. Training will be available from the end of January.

Training will also be available for non-clinical and administration staff, who will be able to access the non-clinical modules of the training such as handling, storage and administrative reporting.

Training modules

COVID-19 vaccine training modules are categorised into two groups, core and additional. Core COVID-19 modules involve training for COVID-19 vaccination more broadly. Additional COVID-19 modules are specific to individual vaccine candidates.

Core COVID-19 training modules will cover:

- handling and storage
- multi-dose vial (MDV) training
- delivery mechanisms of the vaccine
- administrative reporting including eligibility checking
- safety and surveillance monitoring and reporting for adverse events following immunisation
- communication.

Additional COVID-19 training modules include specific training for:

- BioNTech/Pfizer
- Oxford University/AstraZeneca
- Novavax
- future vaccines (i.e as possible new vaccines emerge)

Enrolling in the training

To enrol in the course immunisation providers will be required to have already undertaken routine immunisation training specific to their profession and hold a current practising registration. Immunisation providers will be required to enrol through their Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) number.

Administrative or non-clinical staff can enrol without an AHPRA number to access non-clinical modules.

Online training

All training content will be delivered through an e-learning platform at no cost.

Once the training modules are available a link will be provided on the Department of Health's [COVID-19 vaccines website](#).

COVID-19 and influenza vaccination requirements for aged care workers

While AHPPC strongly encourages COVID-19 vaccination, at this time AHPPC does not recommend mandating COVID-19 vaccination for the aged care workforce at this stage.

Evidence about effectiveness of the vaccines in preventing transmission is not yet available. In addition, there is not yet a clear date by which all residents, staff, visitors and carers will have had an opportunity to be vaccinated. It is anticipated that as the vaccine rollout begins in Australia and continues overseas, additional data on the effectiveness of the vaccine in reducing transmission will become available.

AHPPC will continue to monitor the situation and provide advice to National Cabinet.

AHPPC believes that the initial focus should be on strongly encouraging and facilitating the uptake of COVID-19 vaccination by the aged care workforce.

AHPPC agrees that all available interventions should be relied on to maximise influenza vaccine coverage for the aged care workforce, aged care residents and their carers. This could include, where appropriate, influenza vaccination through Public Health Orders similar to those applied in 2020.

For more information on the AHPPC decision visit the [Department of Health website](#).