



Information for Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services (ACCHS)

This document has been prepared for ACCHS to assist them in responding to patients with questions about the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine.

What is this side effect that everyone is talking about associated with the AstraZeneca vaccine?

There is evidence of a likely link between the AstraZeneca vaccine and an extremely rare blood clotting syndrome (thrombosis with thrombocytopenia).

On 10 April the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) released [advice](#) about the clinical signs to look for between days 4-20 after vaccination, including:

- severe persistent headache
- neurological symptoms (blurred vision, difficulty with speech, drowsiness, seizures)
- shortness of breath
- chest pain
- swelling in your leg
- persistent abdominal (belly) pain
- tiny blood spots under the skin away from the site of injection.

The recommendation from the ATAGI is that use of Comirnaty COVID-19 vaccine (Pfizer) is preferred over AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine in adults under 50 years old who have not already had a first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine.

This recommendation is based on a benefit-to-risk assessment of vaccination, the very low number of COVID-19 cases in Australia, severity of COVID-19 infection on different age groups, and the extremely rare nature of this blood clotting syndrome.

Is the AstraZeneca vaccine safe?

Yes. The AstraZeneca vaccine is safe for the vast majority of people.

The individual benefit-to-risk balance of vaccination with the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine varies with age. This balance is based on factors including the increased risk of complications from COVID-19 with increasing age and the potential lower risk of this very rare, but serious, adverse event with increasing age. ATAGI has recommended the AstraZeneca vaccine remains safe to be given to people aged 50 years and over.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remain a priority group for vaccination, as they are considered to be at increased risk of severe COVID-19 infection.

You cannot catch COVID-19 from the vaccines.

COVID-19
VACCINATION

Safe. Effective. Free.

health.gov.au/covid19-vaccines

I have had my first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine, what do I do now?

If you have had your first vaccine dose without this side effect or other serious adverse effects, you should receive your second dose of AstraZeneca as planned. You might already have an appointment for this. It is recommended that a second dose is given about 12 weeks after the first dose.

What if I am worried about side effects?

If you have recently had your first vaccine dose and are experiencing any side effects that you are worried about, I can book an appointment for you to see your doctor.

Remember that many people will experience mild side effects, such as pain at the injection site, headache, temperature or body aches. These should not last for more than a couple of days. If you have more serious side effects, any that last more than a couple of days, or any other concerns following vaccination you should contact your health service.

I'm booked in for my first dose of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, what do I do?

If you are 50 years of age or older, you can still receive your AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine. This is recommended, but still a personal decision. For people aged over 50, the risks of severe COVID-19 disease if infected are considered to be of greater risk than the vaccination, and very low risk of severe side effects. You can chat with your health care provider about your personal situation.

If you are an adult aged under 50 years, you should only receive a first dose of AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine where the benefit of receiving the vaccine clearly outweighs the risk in your individual circumstance. You may wish to discuss your individual benefit-to-risk balance with your doctor or health clinic.

Generally, if you have not already received a first dose of the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine, then the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine is preferred in adults aged under 50 years.

Updated information about how to receive the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine will be available on the Department of Health website shortly.