

Press Release

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RACGP backs plan to vaccinate 12- to 15-year-olds

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) has welcomed news that all children aged 12 to 15 are eligible to receive the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine, with bookings opening on 13 September.

Earlier this month, the Therapeutic Goods Administration's (TGA) gave [provisional approval](#) for the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine to be delivered to 12- to 15-year olds. Shortly after, the RACGP [spoke out in support](#) of the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) issuing a new recommendation that vulnerable children groups were eligible to receive the vaccine.

Expanding eligibility to all 12- to 15-year-olds comes at an opportune time, with the Delta COVID-19 variant striking many young people in Victoria and NSW - including those aged 16 and under.

RACGP President Dr Karen Price welcomed the decision.

"This is not a virus that only infects and hospitalises older people. It affects children too and we must vaccinate as many people who are eligible as fast as we can," she said.

"Just this week, we learned that authorities are increasingly concerned about the number of children being infected with COVID-19. Although they are less likely to suffer from serious effects, we have seen from international experience that when you have lots of COVID-19 cases the number of children in hospital rises significantly."

Dr Price encouraged parents and carers to talk with children about receiving a COVID-19 vaccination.

"It is important to carefully explain to children that this vaccine will help keep them safe and protect vulnerable people in their community," she said.

"When discussing the vaccine with their kids, parents and carers should point out that this vaccine is being delivered to children their age in numerous countries around the world. It may be helpful to mention that they have previously been given other vaccines for diseases such as polio and chickenpox.

“Many patients, including children, are suffering from ‘information overload’ and may be a little confused as to why the eligibility requirements keep changing and why they should be vaccinated. However, I am confident that if parents and carers take the time to talk to children about why receiving this vaccine is important, they will be willing to roll up their sleeves.

“This is a very daunting time for our children. Navigating those late childhood and early adolescent years is hard enough without the challenges of remote learning, news headlines of case numbers and seeing people in their life like their parents and teachers looking visibly distressed.

“We must keep that in mind and do everything possible to reassure them and encourage them to get vaccinated. To all children 12 and over I say thank you for your patience, I know this must have been a very trying time and I trust that many of you will give a big ‘yes’ when asked if you are okay to receive a COVID-19 vaccine.”

The RACGP President also urged Australians to consider young children when making their own decisions on getting vaccinated.

“The reality is that for the time being children aged under 12 cannot be vaccinated,” she said.

“At this stage, there is no vaccine approved for children under 12. They are less likely to suffer severe effects, but the number is far from negligible. The Delta strain is far more infectious than earlier variants and striking populations who aren’t vaccinated, and that means our children.

“Young children are often cared for by older people, such as grandparents, who are very vulnerable to severe effects if they contract COVID-19. Keep in mind too that there is emerging evidence of children under three being the most likely source of COVID-19 transmission within households.

“Getting vaccinated is something we can do to protect young children who are not yet eligible to receive the vaccine, so if you are eligible - please get yourself vaccinated as soon as possible.

“Remind older family members too not to wait any longer or to at least discuss with their GP if there is still some hesitation. If we vaccinate as many people as possible, we will limit transmissibility in our communities and protect the most vulnerable.

“So, when facing the decision of whether to be vaccinated or not, please don’t just think about yourself. Think about those who don’t even have the option of being vaccinated and what your decision could mean for them.

“Don’t forget that vaccination has always been about both the individual and the broader community.”

~ENDS

RACGP spokespeople are available for interview.

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