

Thursday, 2 March 2023

Get boosted! No room for COVID complacency as winter wave threatens

The AMA is encouraging people to check their eligibility and get a COVID-19 booster to protect themselves for the onset of winter and future waves of COVID-19. Vaccines reduce transmission, reduce the severity of illness and there is emerging evidence that vaccination reduces the chance you will develop long covid.

AMA President Professor Steve Robson said anyone aged over 18 years who has not had a COVID-19 booster or a confirmed COVID infection in the past six months is eligible for another booster.

The Government in early February accepted advice of the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI), which particularly recommended that those over 65 years and adults aged 18-64 years with complex health needs get a 2023 booster if their last COVID-19 vaccine dose or confirmed infection (whichever is the most recent) was 6 months ago or longer, regardless of the number of prior doses received.

Professor Robson said people needed to prepare for the “next wave” of COVID-19 or the next variant to emerge.

“With the COVID-19 virus very capable of mutating it’s inevitable there will be further variants and new waves in the community, and with winter just around the corner, we really want to encourage people to get their booster shot if they are eligible.

“It’s natural over time that we tend to become complacent with the risks associated with COVID-19, however, last year there were 8,800 deaths due to COVID-19 and there has been an increase in people dying with COVID-19 as the pandemic has progressed.

“Clearly there is no room for complacency. The AMA’s strong advice is for eligible people to get their booster shot.

“We know that fewer than three quarters of Australians have had a third dose and fewer than half of eligible Australians actually got a fourth booster.

“The new boosters will cover the original COVID and the newer Omicron strains.

“We’d like to see every Australian who is eligible, getting their vaccine booster because immunity will have waned and we still need protection against severe infection from COVID-19. The best way to protect yourself and your loved ones is to make sure you’re up to date with vaccines.

“Boosters lower the chance of getting COVID-19 and reduce the severity of illness if people contract the virus.”

“We encourage people to talk to their GP or other vaccine provider about their options, what vaccines are available and which vaccine might be the best one for them,” Professor Robson said.

The new Pfizer bivalent vaccine will be available from March 6 and this week the Government announced that a new COVID-19 vaccine from Moderna targeting Omicron variants BA.4 and BA.5 is expected to be available in Australia from April.

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