

COVID-19 vaccination in NSW

Fact sheet for NSW healthcare workers

National COVID-19 vaccination plan

NSW Health is working closely with Australian Government agencies to plan and implement a safe and effective COVID-19 vaccination program in NSW.

A COVID-19 vaccine is expected to be available in Australia from late February 2021 after the Pfizer/BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine was provisionally approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) for people 16 years and older. The vaccine rollout will be led and implemented by the Australian Government.

As doses will initially be limited, the vaccine will be first made available to people who are most vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19 or who have the highest risk of being exposed to, or spreading, the virus.

Vaccinations will be offered in phases, with some frontline health facility workers and quarantine facility workers having access to the vaccine in the first phase of the vaccination program. The NSW Ministry of Health is working with all Local Health Districts and Networks in NSW to identify the staff who will be considered for vaccinated during the first phase of the program. Eligible staff will be informed by their management about how, when and where they will be able to get vaccinated.

The Commonwealth will lead on implementation for the residential aged care and disability care sectors.

Healthcare worker priority groups

Healthcare workers who will be considered for prioritisation in Phase 1a of the vaccination program include:

- Ambulance and patient transport staff
- Emergency department staff
- Critical care ward staff (ICUs and HDUs, ECMO and medical retrieval teams)
- COVID clinic and COVID testing staff (public and private)
- COVID ward staff
- COVID immunisation clinic staff
- COVID pathology lab staff (public and private)
- Workers at the Special Health Accommodation facility.

In addition, staff supporting the above areas will be considered for prioritisation in the Phase 1a of vaccination. This will include cleaners (including contracted cleaning staff), phlebotomists, wards persons (and related roles such as portering and orderly staff), infection control staff, radiology staff, physiotherapists, pharmacy staff, security, social workers, mental health / drug and alcohol consultation liaison staff, medical/surgical team doctors and nurse consultants who may be expected to attend ED, ICU or COVID wards/clinics as part of their normal duties.

Other healthcare workers will be prioritised to receive a vaccine from Phase 1b. A COVID-19 vaccine is expected to be more generally available from mid-2021. The vaccination program will be rolled out throughout 2021.

Types of vaccines

Australia has entered into purchase agreements for Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine and the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, as well as the Novavax vaccine. These vaccines require two doses. The first doses of Pfizer vaccine are expected to be available in Australia from late February. The Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine may arrive in March.

These vaccines have different characteristics, with the Pfizer vaccine having very specific transport and storage (-70°C) and handling requirements. These vaccines will come in multi-dose vials and require careful drawing up.

A vaccine may be more suitable for one group of people than another. NSW Health is waiting for the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) to provide approval for use of other COVID-19 vaccines in Australia, along with information on which population groups the vaccine may be safely given to.

Vaccination hubs

In the first few months of the vaccination program, it is expected that there will be limited doses of the vaccine available in Australia. In Phase 1a, the priority groups will be offered the vaccines at designated vaccination hubs in the first instance. In NSW, these hubs will be located at specific sites with the required storage, vaccine handling and administration capacity. In Phase 1a, NSW Health is planning for vaccination hubs located at RPA, Westmead and Liverpool hospitals, followed by Hornsby, St George, Nepean, Newcastle, Wollongong, Coffs Harbour, Dubbo and Wagga Wagga hospitals. If vaccine supply increases during Phase 1a, additional vaccination hubs, spokes and outreach clinics may be able to be supported.

Once more vaccine doses become available from Phase 1b, it is expected that one or more COVID-19 vaccines will be available for the wider population through usual immunisation providers, including GP practices, GP respiratory clinics and Aboriginal health services.

Monitoring and safety

Before a COVID-19 vaccine is approved for use in Australia, it must pass the Therapeutic Goods

Administration's (TGA) [rigorous assessment and approval processes](https://www.tga.gov.au/covid-19-vaccines) (<https://www.tga.gov.au/covid-19-vaccines>). This includes assessment of the vaccine's safety, quality and effectiveness. The TGA is actively monitoring COVID-19 vaccine development in Australia and around the world and is part of a network of international regulators that meet regularly to discuss the development of COVID-19 vaccines.

NSW Health plans to monitor the safety and uptake of the COVID-19 vaccination program using existing surveillance systems, along with:

- convening a NSW Health COVID-19 Safety Expert Panel of immunisation and other clinical specialists, to review potential adverse events following immunisation (AEFIs)
- establishing an inquiry under the Public Health Act 2010
- assisting with assessments through the National Vaccine Safety Investigation Group (VSIG)
- benchmarking and information sharing with international partners.

COVID safe practices

As the COVID-19 vaccine starts to be available in NSW, it is essential that all healthcare workers maintain vigilance for COVID-19 and ensure they continue to follow infection prevention and control measures at work and COVID safe behaviours in their daily lives. These practices will be essential to keep in place to prevent spread of the virus until everyone is able to be adequately protected from COVID-19.

More information

Australian Department of Health

Information on the national COVID-19 vaccination strategy can be found at:
<https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines>

National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance

Answers to common questions about COVID-19 vaccines can be found at:
<https://www.ncirs.org.au/covid-19/covid-19-vaccines-frequently-asked-questions>

Training resources

Training modules are available for clinical staff including:

- Vaccine storage and cold management modules – visit [HETI](https://www.heti.nsw.gov.au/education-and-training/my-health-learning)
<https://www.heti.nsw.gov.au/education-and-training/my-health-learning>
- [NCIRS Shoulder injury related to vaccine administration \(SIRVA\) presentation](https://www.ncirs.org.au/education-and-training/presentations-adverse-events-following-immunisation)
<https://www.ncirs.org.au/education-and-training/presentations-adverse-events-following-immunisation>
- [Melbourne Vaccine Education Centre \(MVEC\) Vaccination procedures eLearning module](https://mvec.mcri.edu.au/mvec-education-portal/elearning/vaccination-procedures/?tab=tab-curriculum)
<https://mvec.mcri.edu.au/mvec-education-portal/elearning/vaccination-procedures/?tab=tab-curriculum>
- [Anaphylaxis after vaccination – job aid](https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Documents/vaccine-training-job-aid.pdf)
<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Documents/vaccine-training-job-aid.pdf>

A multi-dose vial training module will be made available soon.