



Australian Government



COVID-19 vaccines: common questions

Are COVID-19 vaccines safe?

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) are the scientists and medical experts who regulate and approve all vaccines and medicines, and other medical products for use in Australia. The TGA checks all COVID-19 vaccines for quality, safety and effectiveness before approving them for use in Australia. This is the same process that all vaccines go through in Australia.

Medical experts in the TGA continuously check all vaccines to make sure they are safe. Vaccines are only allowed to be used in Australia after they have been assessed and approved.

Have COVID-19 vaccines been developed too quickly?

COVID-19 vaccines were developed to be safe and effective. It may seem like they were developed quickly, however researchers around the world have been working hard to develop COVID-19 vaccines from the start of the pandemic.

Safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines were developed quickly because of:

- a large amount of funding invested in research and manufacturing;
- the availability of new technology; and
- researchers, scientists and manufacturers around the world working together.

Some steps of the clinical trials and approval process happened at the same time, instead of one after the other. This has given us access to the vaccine as quickly as possible.

How do COVID-19 vaccines work?

COVID-19 vaccines work like other vaccines. Vaccines help a person's body to recognise and fight against viruses that can cause illness. The COVID-19 vaccine helps the body recognise and fight the virus that causes COVID-19.

How do COVID-19 vaccines protect us?

COVID-19 vaccines teach your body to recognise and fight the COVID-19 virus. They do not contain COVID-19. You cannot get COVID-19 from having the vaccines. Vaccines are a safe way of building protection against the virus in the body, without causing illness.

COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in Australia have been shown to be very good at protecting against severe illness and death.

You can talk to your doctor about the COVID-19 vaccines and why vaccination is an important part of keeping the community safe and healthy.

What side effects should I expect from the COVID-19 vaccines?

All vaccines can have some side effects. These side effects are usually mild and only last for a few days.

Side effects can include:

- a sore arm after the injection
- fever
- muscle aches
- headaches.

These are a sign that the vaccine is working.

If you have any questions or worries after your vaccinations, contact your vaccination clinic or doctor.

There is a link between the AstraZeneca vaccine and a very rare condition, which involves blood clotting, and low blood platelet levels. Read more about this at:

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publication/astrazeneca-information-other-languages>

Do COVID-19 vaccines affect pregnancy or breast-feeding?

If you are pregnant, you should speak to your doctor about COVID-19 vaccines. If you don't have medical risks, or high exposure to COVID-19, you and your doctor may decide to wait until after the baby is born before you have the COVID-19 vaccines.

If you are breastfeeding, you can receive COVID-19 vaccines. There are no expected safety concerns for breastfeeding women, or their babies.

If you are planning to get pregnant, you can still receive COVID-19 vaccines.

If you have any questions about COVID-19 vaccines and pregnancy or breastfeeding, speak to your doctor.

Who can get COVID-19 vaccines?

Everyone in Australia can get the free vaccination when it's their turn. If you are receiving your vaccination at a Commonwealth vaccination clinic or state or territory vaccination clinic, you won't need a Medicare card. To stay up to date on when you can get your vaccine visit www.health.gov.au/covid19-vaccines-languages

Do I need two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine? Do they have to be the same type of COVID-19 vaccine to be effective?

Yes, Australia's COVID-19 vaccines require two doses to provide the best immunity.

It is important you get the same type of COVID-19 vaccine for it to be most effective.

How can I book my COVID-19 vaccine?

To find out when it is your turn to get the COVID-19 vaccines, you can use the Eligibility Checker at <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/covid-19-vaccine-eligibility-checker>

Once you complete the Eligibility Checker you will see a list of places you can contact to book to have your vaccine.

You can also talk to your doctor about booking in for your vaccine.

Are COVID-19 vaccines compulsory in Australia?

No, vaccination for COVID-19 is voluntary. People can choose if they want to have COVID-19 vaccines. You will not receive a fine for not having the COVID-19 vaccine.

Can I have one of the vaccines from overseas?

People in Australia can only have COVID-19 vaccines that have been approved by the Australian Government for use in Australia. These vaccines may also be approved for use in other countries. You should not try and buy a COVID-19 vaccine online, as these are likely to be unsafe or fake.

Once I have had a vaccination, do I still need to take other precautions to stop the spread of COVID-19?

After receiving your vaccination, it is still important for you to continue safe practices to stop COVID-19 from spreading.

Stay 1.5 metres away from others, wash your hands regularly with soap and water, stay home when you are sick, get tested for COVID-19 and wear a mask when required.

Do people who have had COVID-19 still need to be vaccinated?

People who have had COVID-19 and have recovered should still be vaccinated. Because the virus that causes COVID-19 is a new virus, experts do not know how long natural immunity might last after the infection. It is very likely that protection from re-infection will reduce over time. Therefore it is sensible to have the vaccine to boost immunity and ensure that the protection lasts longer.

Will the flu vaccine protect me against getting COVID-19?

Influenza (flu) and COVID-19 are both viruses, but they are not the same. The flu vaccine does not give immunity to, or protection from, COVID-19.

The COVID-19 vaccine will not give protection from the flu.

It is recommended to have both the flu and COVID-19 vaccines, but remember you need to leave at least two weeks between the flu vaccine and any COVID-19 vaccine.

Should I take blood thinning medication before having the AstraZeneca vaccine?

No, it is not necessary to take blood thinning medication before receiving your vaccination.

You should continue to take your regular medication unless advised by your doctor.

Will COVID-19 vaccines work if COVID-19 changes?

All viruses change over time. This is called mutation. Ongoing scientific evidence shows COVID-19 vaccines will still be effective against new types (mutations) of COVID-19. The Therapeutic Goods Administration will continue to closely look at this as part of their usual approval and monitoring processes.

It may mean people need booster shots like tetanus and whooping cough, or it may mean we need to be vaccinated again. This is like how we are vaccinated for the flu each year. Researchers are still investigating this.

Whether you will need additional booster doses, such as an annual booster, for COVID-19 vaccines is still being determined by ongoing clinical trials. In the future, your doctor can explain whether COVID-19 boosters will be needed and how often.

Will COVID-19 vaccines change my DNA?

No, COVID-19 vaccines do not change your DNA.

Some of the new COVID-19 vaccines use a fragment of Messenger RNA (mRNA) to instruct your body to make an immune response against COVID-19. The vaccines do not give you COVID-19.

DNA is a different type of molecule to the RNA in the mRNA vaccines. The mRNA does not do anything to your DNA, and is broken down soon after it enters your body.

Is the vaccine going to collect my DNA?

No, when you get a vaccine, it goes into your body and does not take anything from your body. COVID-19 vaccines in Australia are given by injection. There is nothing taken from your body, including your DNA. DNA is not collected by having a COVID-19 vaccination.

Will COVID-19 vaccines connect me to the internet?

No, COVID-19 vaccines do not – and cannot – connect you to the internet. The vaccine is a medical product and is not digital.

Do COVID-19 vaccines contain microchips or tracking technology?

None of the COVID-19 vaccines contain software or microchips. They cannot track people.

Can COVID-19 vaccines give me COVID-19?

None of the approved COVID-19 vaccines in Australia contain the live virus that causes COVID-19. This means they cannot give you COVID-19.

Some side effects from COVID-19 vaccines, such as fever, muscle aches and tiredness, can seem like symptoms of COVID-19. These symptoms are part of the normal reaction to vaccination. They are a sign that the vaccine is working and the body is building protection against the COVID-19 virus.

Do the COVID-19 vaccines contain animal products?

The COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in Australia do not contain any animal, meat or egg products.

What opinion do faith leaders hold on COVID-19 vaccines?

The COVID-19 vaccines approved for use in Australia are permitted by many faith leaders.

On 22 December 2020, the Vatican released a statement to support the use of COVID-19 vaccines. You can read the Vatican's statement at:

https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_con_cfaith_doc_20201221_nota-vaccini-anticovid_en.html

The Australian Fatwa Council issued a COVID-19 Vaccine Fatwa on 13 February 2021. The Fatwa was issued after researching and discussing COVID-19 vaccines with trusted and credible Muslim doctors and medical experts. The Fatwa advises Australia's COVID-19 vaccines are permissible according to the Islamic law. You can read the Australian Fatwa Council's COVID-19 Vaccine Fatwa at: <https://www.anic.org.au/fatwa-council/>

The Great Synagogue Sydney published a Sermon on 27 February 2021 supporting the use of COVID-19 vaccines. You can read the Sermon at:

<https://www.greatsynagogue.org.au/rabbiscorner.html>

Who can I contact if I have questions about the COVID-19 vaccines?

If you want to talk to someone about COVID-19 vaccines, call the National Coronavirus Helpline on 1800 020 080. The hotline is available 24 hours every day. For the translating and interpreting Service, call 131 450.

You can learn more at the Department of Health's website where information is available in 63 languages www.health.gov.au/covid19-vaccines-languages

You can also talk to your doctor or local healthcare professional.

It is important to stay informed through official sources.