

# Getting Vaccinated Against COVID

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**COVID-19 vaccinations are a big step towards protecting the lives of millions of people around the globe and reducing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

On a global scale, COVID-19 has already claimed the lives of over 3.3 million people.

All Tasmanians need to have accurate information to help them make an informed decision about getting a COVID-19 vaccine. Below are answers to Tasmania's most frequently asked questions.

### **Why should I get vaccinated?**

Vaccination is an important way to protect you, your family and your community against COVID-19. You will be protected from severe COVID-related illness and will have the peace of mind of offering another layer of protection to your loved ones and the people around you.

High levels of vaccination against COVID-19 is a key tool in fighting the pandemic. If most of the adult population gets vaccinated, this will reduce the health, social and economic impacts of the pandemic. Every dose of vaccine makes a difference.

### **Which COVID-19 vaccines are available in Tasmania and how do they work?**

There are currently two COVID-19 vaccines available in Australia: the Pfizer vaccine and the AstraZeneca vaccine. Both vaccines require two doses. For the Pfizer vaccine you will receive two vaccinations approximately three weeks apart. For the AstraZeneca vaccine you will receive two vaccinations approximately 12 weeks apart.

Both vaccines are highly effective at reducing the severity of COVID-19. Both vaccines work by training your immune system to recognise and respond to the virus that causes COVID-19.

### **What about vaccine side effects and the blood clotting issue?**

Over a billion doses of COVID-19 vaccine have been delivered globally to date. The COVID-19 vaccinations available in Australia have been approved by our expert regulatory body, the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA). Once approved, the TGA and the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) monitor data within Australia and from around the world to ensure that the vaccines remain safe.

All vaccines can have side effects, and the COVID-19 vaccines are no different. After vaccination some people experience no side effects at all and some experience mild side effects. Serious side effects are very rare.

Common side effects of vaccination may include redness at the vaccine site, a sore arm, muscle aches and fatigue. Some people may also experience a mild fever or headache. These symptoms usually start within 24 hours of vaccination and last for 1–2 days. These symptoms are not of concern unless severe or persistent. If you experience side effects that worry you, contact your GP.

A rare but serious side effect called thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS) has been associated with the AstraZeneca vaccine. TTS occurs when there are blood clots (thrombosis) and low platelets (thrombocytopenia). This

syndrome generally occurs between 4—20 days after the first dose of the vaccine. Global data suggests that while the overall incidence of TTS is low, it is higher in those under 50 years of age. This newly described syndrome is different from more common clots, such as deep vein thrombosis. These more common blood clots can occur in around 50 Australians every day separate to vaccination and are not related to the rare TTS clotting disorder.

TTS has not been seen after the Pfizer vaccine. As a result, the Pfizer vaccine is the preferred vaccine for people under 50 years of age.

If you have already received your first dose of AstraZeneca without complication, there is no reason to delay or miss your second dose (even if you are under 50). Both doses of the vaccine are required to be protected against COVID-19.

If you have any concerns about getting vaccinated, speak with your usual health care provider.

### **Which vaccine should I get?**

Pfizer is preferred over the AstraZeneca vaccine for adults under the age of 50.

In people aged 50 years and over, AstraZeneca is recommended. The benefits of vaccination far outweigh the risk of the rare but serious blood clotting complication for people in this age group. This is because the risk of serious outcomes from COVID-19 infection increase with age.

Decisions about which vaccine to administer are based on the best medical evidence available.

If you have particular concerns about your own circumstances or condition, please speak to your doctor or health care provider.