

COVID-19 vaccination rolls out to the community

The first of the highly anticipated community COVID-19 vaccinations were delivered to eligible patients in general practices across Central Queensland, Wide Bay and the Sunshine Coast this week.

Phase 1b is for the over 70's, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders over 55, adults with underlying medical conditions, including those with a disability, along with critical high-risk workers and those working on the frontline in healthcare.

Buderim general practitioner Dr Jon Harper said the aim of the vaccination program is to reduce the severity of symptoms in people who contract COVID-19, and to reduce hospital presentations and preventable deaths as a result of the virus.

"In many ways this is just another vaccination program; general practices have been rolling out national vaccination programs for many years and practice staff are well trained in safely storing and administering vaccines," Dr Harper said.

"In Australia, we have the benefit of watching other countries that have already vaccinated millions of people and the data shows that the vaccine is incredibly safe.

"There are some minor, short-lived side effects, that are relatively common in many vaccines – sore arm, brief chills, muscle aches.

"Severe allergic reactions, like anaphylaxis, has occurred in only a very small number of cases and people with a history of anaphylaxis should talk to their doctor before being vaccinated."

The COVID-19 vaccine is delivered in two doses, the second delivered 10 to 12 weeks after the first.

Robb Major from Central Queensland, Wide Bay, Sunshine Coast PHN said some, but not all, general practices have opted in to deliver COVID-19 vaccines for this stage of the vaccine roll-out, and supplies of the vaccine would vary between practices.

"The vaccination roll-out will go slowly at first while supply is secured but as it progressively increases over the months ahead, more practices are likely to come on board too," Mr Major said.

"We are lucky here in Queensland, and indeed Australia, that the risk of contracting COVID-19 is very low, so there's no rush to get your jab in the first week.

"It's more important people to take the time to go online and check their eligibility for this round before calling a doctor and making an appointment.

To check your eligibility or that of a loved one online via the Eligibility Checker:
covid-vaccine.healthdirect.gov.au/eligibility

Those who prefer not to use the online option can call the National Coronavirus and COVID-19 Vaccination Helpline on 1800 020 080.

Mr Major said while it was prudent to vaccinate our most vulnerable populations first, all eligible Australians will have the opportunity to have the COVID-19 vaccination in the coming months.

"In the meantime, we encourage everyone to make sure their Medicare details are up to date and continue to practise good hygiene, physical distancing, adhere to local restrictions and understand how to isolate if needed," Mr Major said.

"If you're feeling unwell, particularly with flu-like symptoms, don't go to work or to activities in big groups.

"And of course, go and get tested."

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