



# Communication toolkit

This toolkit provides information and materials to help you communicate about COVID-19 vaccine doses.

## Target audience

- Older people, their families and carers

## Background

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) has updated advice for the COVID-19 vaccine.

If it has been 6 months since receiving a COVID-19 vaccine or a confirmed COVID-19 infection, an additional dose:

- is **recommended** for people aged 75 or older
- should **be considered** for people aged 65-74 and people aged 18-64 years with severe immunocompromise, following discussion with their health care provider.

People aged 65 years and older who have not had a COVID-19 booster this year, are recommended to get a dose.

Older age continues to be the biggest risk factor for severe COVID-19 disease.

All COVID-19 vaccines have shown to provide benefits to eligible people by reducing the severity of illness. However, the Monovalent Omicron XBB.1.5 vaccines are preferred over other vaccines for eligible people.

Vaccination is the best way to protect older people from severe illness or death from COVID-19.

## What's in this toolkit

- Key messages
- Frequently asked questions
- Newsletter article
- Social media post

# Key messages

## Guidance

These messages may assist you to communicate with your community and stakeholders on the additional COVID-19 dose.

## Talking points

- Age is the strongest risk factor for severe COVID-19 disease. Older people, particularly those aged 75 years and older, are more likely to get seriously ill or die from COVID-19.
- Vaccination is the best way to protect you from severe illness, hospitalisation or death from COVID-19.
- The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) has updated advice for the COVID-19 vaccination.
  - People aged 75 years or older, and who have not had a COVID-19 vaccination or a confirmed COVID-19 infection in the past 6 months are recommended to have an additional dose.
  - People aged 65-74 years, and people aged 18-64 years with severe immunocompromise, should consider an additional dose. If it has been 6 months since their last COVID-19 vaccine dose or confirmed infection, they should discuss this with their health care provider.
- Everyone aged 65 years and older are recommended to have a COVID-19 booster this year.
- If you are unsure of whether you have had a COVID-19 infection in the last 6 months, it is safe to get another dose.
- Among Australians aged 65 years or older, having a COVID-19 booster dose in the last 3 months reduced the risk of death from COVID-19 by as much as 74.9%<sup>1</sup> compared to those who were unvaccinated. After 6 months, the risk is still reduced by more than 50%.
- All COVID-19 vaccines have shown to provide benefits to eligible people by reducing the severity of illness. However, the Monovalent Omicron XBB.1.5 vaccines are preferred over other vaccines for eligible people.
- For more information, see the Department of Health and Aged Care website: [health.gov.au/covid-19-vaccines](https://health.gov.au/covid-19-vaccines).
- Find a COVID-19 vaccine clinic on the health Service Finder at [healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services](https://healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services). You can also call 1800 022 222 if you need COVID-19 advice.
- The Australian Government is supporting the aged care sector to ensure everyone has access to the COVID-19 vaccine. This includes helping residential aged care homes to arrange COVID-19 vaccinations with local primary health care providers such as GPs and community pharmacists where necessary.
- Oral antiviral treatments are safe and effective in reducing the severity of COVID-19 and are available to people at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19 including people 70 years and older.
- Older people are encouraged to have an early discussion with their GP or nurse practitioner about:
  - whether an oral antiviral suits your health needs
  - developing a COVID-19 plan if you test positive to COVID-19 including how to access antivirals quickly if you need them.
- Treatment must be started as soon as COVID-19 symptoms begin. Antiviral treatments may help stop COVID-19 infection from becoming severe.

<sup>1</sup> Liu B. et al (2023) 'Effectiveness of COVID-19 vaccination against COVID-19 specific and all-cause mortality in older Australians: a population based study' *The Lancet*, accessed 12 October 2023

## Frequently asked questions

### **I have not had a 2023 booster yet, is it too late for me to have one?**

No. Anyone recommended for a COVID-19 vaccine, should get one as soon as possible if they haven't had one yet.

### **What if I missed one of my COVID-19 vaccine doses?**

Australia has moved away from numbering doses and a 'catch-up' vaccination is not required.

ATAGI recommends a primary course of COVID-19 vaccinations, including a dose in 2023 and an additional dose if recommended.

It doesn't matter how many doses a person has had before 2023.

### **I had COVID last month, but my last dose was more than 6 months ago. Should I have another dose?**

There is not much benefit from having a COVID-19 vaccine soon after infection.

If you are unsure if you have had a COVID-19 infection in the past 6 months, it is safe to get a dose.

### **Who can give me a COVID-19 booster?**

You can find a COVID-19 vaccine clinic and book an appointment with the health Service Finder at [healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services](https://healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services).

You can get a COVID-19 vaccine from your local GP or pharmacist, or a GP or pharmacist visiting your aged care home.

### **Is there a new vaccine that people should be asking for?**

All COVID-19 vaccines are anticipated to provide benefit to eligible people. However, the monovalent Omicron XBB.1.5 vaccines are preferred over other vaccines for eligible people.

### **Where can I find information about COVID-19 and vaccines?**

See the Department of Health and Aged Care website: [health.gov.au/covid-19-vaccines](https://health.gov.au/covid-19-vaccines).

You can also find a COVID-19 vaccine clinic and book an appointment with the health Service Finder at [healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services](https://healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services) or call 1800 022 222 if you need COVID-19 advice.

### **What can older people do if they get COVID-19?**

If you get COVID-19 you need to take the [oral antiviral treatments](#) as soon as possible or within 5 days after getting symptoms.

Oral antiviral treatments are safe and effective in reducing the severity of COVID-19 and are available to people at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19 including people 70 years and older.

Make sure you talk to your GP or nurse practitioner to find out whether the oral antiviral treatments are right for you and how to access antivirals quickly if you need them.

# Newsletter item

## Guidance

These messages may be used in the local newsletters.

## Additional 2023 COVID-19 vaccination update

It is important to ensure the safety of our community, especially our older members.

Older age continues to be the biggest risk factor for severe COVID-19.

Vaccination is the best way to protect yourself from severe illness or death from COVID-19.

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) has updated advice for the COVID-19 vaccine.

If it has been 6 months since receiving a COVID-19 vaccine or a confirmed COVID-19 infection, an additional dose:

- is **recommended** for people aged 75 or older
- should **be considered** for people aged 65-74 and people aged 18-64 years with severe immunocompromise, following discussion with their health care provider.

People aged 65 years and older who have not had a COVID-19 booster this year, are recommended to get a dose.

All COVID-19 vaccines are anticipated to provide benefit to eligible people. However, the monovalent Omicron XBB.1.5 vaccines are preferred over other vaccines for eligible people.

If you know an older member of our community who may benefit from this information, please share it with them.

## Book a vaccination

Let's ensure that everyone has access to the latest updates on COVID-19 vaccinations.

For more information, visit the Department of Health and Aged Care website: [health.gov.au/covid-19-vaccines](https://health.gov.au/covid-19-vaccines).

To find a COVID-19 vaccine clinic near you:

- **Speak** with your doctor or pharmacist
- **Book** an appointment on the [health service finder](#).

Call the healthdirect helpline on 1800 022 222 if you need COVID-19 advice.

## Oral antiviral treatments

Oral antiviral treatments are safe and effective in reducing the severity of COVID-19 and are available to people at high risk of severe illness from COVID-19 including people 70 years and older.

Be prepared, if you are aged 70 years or older, or have one of the risk factors, we encourage you to have an early discussion with your GP or nurse practitioner about:

- whether an oral antiviral suits your health needs
- developing a COVID-19 plan if you test positive to COVID-19 including how to access antivirals quickly if you need them.

You must start the treatment as soon as possible or within 5 days of COVID-19 symptoms beginning. Oral antiviral treatments may help stop COVID-19 infection from becoming severe.

# Social media post

## Guidance

This content is suggested for use on your social media channels.

### Copy

Are you aged 75 years or older? If it has been 6 months since your last COVID-19 vaccination or infection, it is recommended that you receive an additional COVID-19 vaccine dose now.

People aged 65-74 years and people aged 18-64 with severe immunocompromise should also consider receiving an additional dose, following discussions with their health care provider.

If you are unsure of whether you have had a COVID-19 infection in the last 6 months, it is safe to get another dose.

If you know an older person living in Australia who may benefit from this information, please share it with them.

Book an appointment at [healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services](https://healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services) or call 1800 022 222 for COVID-19 advice.

### Social media tile

## Do you need an additional COVID-19 booster?



If you are aged:



Younger people, aged 18 to 74 should also consider an additional 2023 booster if they're at higher risk of severe COVID-19 illness.

Book an appointment at [healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services](https://healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services)

Vaccines can be booked 6 months after your last COVID-19 vaccine dose.

