

# Information on COVID-19 Oxford University Vaccine AstraZeneca



## About the vaccine

COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca (AstraZeneca Pty Ltd) is a vaccine that can prevent people from becoming ill from COVID-19. COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca cannot give you COVID-19. It contains the genetic code for an important part of the SARS-CoV-2 virus called the spike protein. After getting the vaccine, your body makes copies of the spike protein, and your immune system will learn to recognise and fight against the SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes COVID-19.

To prevent COVID-19, everyone older than 18 years of age should get vaccinated, with a few exceptions specified in this information sheet. **Vaccination is voluntary.**

You can discuss any concerns or questions you have about COVID-19 vaccination with your immunisation provider and/or your GP before you receive the vaccine.

## Benefits of the vaccine

A very large clinical trial showed that COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca is effective in preventing COVID-19 in people aged 18 years and older. People who had two doses of COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca were about 82 per cent less likely to get COVID-19 than people who did not get the vaccine if the two doses of COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca were spaced by 12 weeks.

Studies in the United Kingdom suggest that the rate of hospitalisation with COVID-19 is reduced by about 95% in people who have received the full course of COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca compared with unvaccinated people.

Protection against COVID-19 starts from about 2–3 weeks after the first dose. While one dose has been shown to provide significant protection, it may only last for the short-term. **Two doses will give optimal protection.** No vaccine is 100 per cent effective, so it is possible that you can still get sick from COVID-19 after vaccination. We do not know how long the protection from COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca will last. We will learn more about this over time.

We currently do not know how effective COVID-19 vaccines are at preventing the spread of the virus.

However some studies overseas have shown a significant reduction in detection of COVID-19 virus in vaccinated people, even after the first dose. This strongly suggests that COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca will help prevent the spread of COVID-19. However, a vaccinated person can still be infected with COVID-19. Even if they have no symptoms or only mild symptoms they could still pass it on to others.

This is why it is important to continue other preventative measures like:

- physical (social) distancing
- hand washing or use of hand hygiene solution
- wearing a face mask
- COVID-19 testing and quarantine/isolation as required

If you have been vaccinated with two doses of COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca, you should still get a COVID-19 test if you have symptoms that meet testing criteria according to the Department of Health Victoria (e.g. fever, cough, sore throat).

## Who can receive this vaccine

People aged 18 years and older can receive this COVID-19 vaccination.

Certain groups of people are prioritised to receive vaccines first because they are at higher risk of exposure to the COVID-19 virus (e.g. workers in border or quarantine facilities, a healthcare facility or aged-care facility) or severe illness and death from COVID-19 (e.g. are older or have underlying medical conditions).

## Who should not receive this vaccine

You should not receive this vaccine if you have had:

- anaphylaxis (a type of severe allergic reaction) to a previous dose of the same COVID-19 vaccine, or
- anaphylaxis after exposure to any component of a COVID-19 vaccine.

## Precautions for vaccination

If **you have a history of anaphylaxis** (a type of severe allergic reaction) to any substance, or **you have an adrenaline autoinjector** (e.g. an EpiPen), you will need to stay for 30 minutes of observation after you have your vaccine. In the very rare cases where severe allergic reactions were reported after COVID-19 vaccines, these reactions usually occurred in the first 30 minutes after vaccination.

If **you have a bleeding disorder** or you are **taking a blood-thinning medication** (anticoagulant), tell your immunisation provider. Your immunisation provider can help determine whether it is safe for you to have an intramuscular injection, and to decide the best timing for injection.

## Special circumstances to discuss with your GP or immuniser before vaccination

### People with weakened immune systems (immunocompromised)

The Australian Government strongly recommends people who are immunocompromised receive the COVID-19 vaccination. COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca is safe in people who are immunocompromised.

People who are immunocompromised, including those living with HIV, have a higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, including a higher risk of death.

### Women who are pregnant, breastfeeding or planning pregnancy

If you are breastfeeding, you can have COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca. You do not need to stop breastfeeding after vaccination. If you are planning pregnancy, you can also have COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca. You do not need to have a pregnancy test before vaccination.

Pregnant women are not routinely recommended to have COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca, but can consider vaccination particularly if they are at higher risk of getting COVID-19 e.g. due to their occupation, or if they have risk factors for severe illness, e.g. due to pre-existing medical conditions.

If you are pregnant, your healthcare provider can help you to assess the benefits and risks of vaccination.

### People with a history of COVID-19

Past history of COVID-19 is not a contraindication to vaccination. Evidence suggests that past infection reduces the risk of reinfection for at least 6 months. If you have had COVID-19, tell your immunisation provider.

Your provider may advise to wait for up to six months before having a COVID-19 vaccine.

## COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca and children

COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca has only been provisionally approved for use in people aged 18 years or older, and cannot be given to younger people. Clinical trials are currently testing COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca in older children, but we do not yet have the results. The risk of COVID-19, especially severe disease, in children is lower than in older adolescents and adults.

## Ensuring the safety of COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca

Increased funding for vaccine research, and access to a very large numbers of volunteers for research studies, has meant the COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca and other COVID-19 vaccines have been developed quickly. Large clinical trials involving around 17,000 people confirmed COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca to be safe and effective.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) assesses all vaccines in Australia. This ensures that in order for a vaccine to be approved it is safe, effective and manufactured to a very high quality standard. A description of the process for approval of COVID-19 vaccines is available on the [TGA website](#).

The safety of COVID-19 vaccines will be monitored continuously throughout the COVID-19 vaccination program. **Suspected side effects can be reported to your vaccination provider or other healthcare professional.** They will then make a formal report on your behalf to your state or territory health department or directly to the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA).

If you would prefer to report it yourself, please visit the <http://www.safevac.org.au/> or [www.tga.gov.au/reporting-suspected-side-effects-associated-covid-19-vaccine](http://www.tga.gov.au/reporting-suspected-side-effects-associated-covid-19-vaccine) for more information on how to report suspected side effects associated with COVID-19 vaccines (see links below).

## Useful websites for further information and to report side effects:

- [www.tga.gov.au/covid-19-vaccine-approval-process](http://www.tga.gov.au/covid-19-vaccine-approval-process)
- [www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines](http://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines)
- [www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/vaccine](http://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/vaccine)
- <http://www.safevac.org.au/>