

COVID-19 Booster

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About COVID-19 vaccine booster doses

A COVID-19 **booster** is another dose of COVID-19 vaccine given when you have completed your original vaccine series (for most people that is 2 doses), and protection against the virus has **decreased over time**.

Why should I get a booster?

When your protection from your first two doses becomes less over time, a booster dose increases your protection against:

- infection causing COVID-19
- severe disease
- dying from COVID-19

Current advice is that the vaccination series that offers maximum protection against COVID-19 is three-doses: two original doses and a booster 3 months later for most people.

Who can get a booster?

Booster doses are available to you if you are over 18 and have had your second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine more than three months ago.

Who should not get a booster?

At the moment, the following people should not get a booster:

- people aged 12 to 17 years
- people with much weaker immune systems who have already had a third dose.

Is a booster dose free?

Yes.

What is the difference between a booster and a third dose?

People with much weaker immune systems may have been told by their doctor to get an additional dose of vaccine, called the third dose. This could be due to, for example, being on cancer treatment or having once received an organ transplant. This additional dose is intended to bump up the immune response to their initial vaccinations for people with very weak immunity. This can be because their immune systems are not very good at protecting them from viruses or other illnesses.

When can I get a booster?

You can book a booster dose if it has been three months or longer since your second dose of COVID-19 vaccine.

You can check that date by looking at your vaccination certificate, and then add 3 months. For example, if you had your second dose on 23 November, you would be eligible for a booster on 23 February.

How to get a booster vaccine

You can get a COVID-19 booster dose from the large vaccination centres in Melbourne, a GP or a participating pharmacist. One of these clinics is the StarHealth clinic at Prahran Town Hall.

You can call 1800 675 398 to book a booster dose appointment or to ask where you can walk-in without one.

Which vaccine will I get for my booster?

Most people will receive the Pfizer vaccine as their booster dose. You can safely get this Pfizer booster dose regardless of which COVID-19 vaccine you received for your initial doses.

The AstraZeneca vaccine can be used as a booster dose if you:

- can't have an mRNA vaccine for medical reasons, or
- had two doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine previously.

If you're not sure which booster dose you're eligible for, talk to a GP.

Common, mild side effects following a booster dose are similar to the side effects following the first two doses.

Does my booster show up on my vaccination certificate?

Your digital vaccination certificate gets updated when you have each dose of vaccine. This includes a third dose if you are severely immunocompromised, or your booster dose.

If you need a new print-out of a hard-copy certificate, you can ask for one at your Medicare office, or your GP or chemist might be able to help you too.

Booster doses will also appear on your Australian Immunisation Record.

Are booster doses mandatory?

No. You do not have to get a booster dose, but you are encouraged to get one to help keep your immunity against COVID-19 high.

Do I have to tell my employer if I have a booster?

No. You do not currently need to declare your booster doses or third doses to employers in industries where vaccination against COVID-19 is mandatory.

I need more information.

An excellent source of information about boosters and vaccines of any kind is your GP or local pharmacist.

You can get more information about COVID-19 boosters by calling 1800 675 398 or visiting this website: <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/getting-your-vaccination/booster-doses>

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