

CONSUMER FAQs

- What is the youngest age that can access the vaccine
 - As the youngest age is 16 years old at which any COVID-19 vaccine brand is currently registered for use, and the youngest age for a planned vaccination is 18 years old, this informed consent topic will not cover children or minors and the consent process.
- The various vaccine have been developed too quickly – How can we be sure it is safe?
 - The TGA has approved this vaccine after an in-depth and independent full assessment was undertaken (NCIRS, 2020; TGA, 2020; Healthdirect, 2020).
 - An unprecedented amount of resources and number of international researchers have been working towards the same clinical goal and have achieved this due to the devastating impact COVID-19 has had (NCIRS, 2020; Healthdirect, 2020).
 - The same number of trials and tests has been undertaken with COVID-19 vaccines as expected with any other new medicines. The vast number of trial participants in target groups has allowed this to happen more quickly than usual (NCIRS, 2020).
 - Pharmaceutical companies invested in manufacturing early on, so there was no delay between completion of trials and safety testing and the roll-out (NCIRS, 2020).
 - Technology has evolved to be able to manufacture vaccines faster including sequencing the genetic code of the virus (Healthdirect 2020; NCIRS, 2020; Lewandowsky, et. al., 2021).
- What are the possible side-effects of the vaccines?
 - All vaccines can cause side-effects. Usually, only mild effects may be experienced which disappear quickly (Lewandowsky, et. al., 2021; NCIRS, 2020).
 - Common side effects are reported to be very similar to those that you may experience with other vaccines. These are normal as your immune system is being activated. Examples include:
 - Muscle soreness, redness or swelling at the injection site.
 - Fever.
 - General tiredness for a few days
 - Headache (ATAGI, 2021b; Healthdirect, 2020).

- Can you get COVID-19 from the different vaccines and can the vaccines change your genetic code?
 - No. None of the COVID-19 vaccines contains live coronaviruses. Therefore, the virus is unable to replicate and grow to cause an infection (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2021).
 - The mRNA genetic material in the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is cleared and the mRNA does not enter the human cell nucleus which is where our DNA is located and cannot alter your DNA or genetic make-up (CDC, 2021).
 - The AstraZeneca recombinant, genetically modified vaccine cannot spread or multiply throughout the body. None of the active vaccine components enter the human cell nucleus and cannot alter your DNA or genetic make-up.
 - Receiving a vaccine will not result in a positive COVID-19 swab test. However, it is possible for a person to catch COVID-19 just before or after a vaccination and therefore return a positive test due to an active infection acquired before the vaccine was effective (CDC, 2021).
 - Following the AstraZeneca vaccine an antibody test for the spike protein of COVID-19 may be affected.
 - It is important to still get a COVID-19 test performed at your local testing centre if you have any of the COVID-19 symptoms, even after you have been vaccinated.
- Now that I have received the vaccine, do I still need to follow physical distancing and wear a mask when recommended?
 - Yes, all COVID-19 safe preventative measures such as wearing masks, physical distancing and frequent hand washing should still be followed after receiving the vaccine (NCIRS, 2020). This is because the vaccine program will take a while to be rolled out and for the effect to be seen. If the vaccine program is effective and a large proportion of people are immunised then restrictions may be able to ease if herd immunity develops (NCIRS, 2020).
 - Herd immunity is when enough people in a population are vaccinated and immune to prevent person to person transfer of a particular disease. Achieving this requires a large proportion of the population to be vaccinated and the vaccine to provide effective, long term protection. As we learn more about COVID-19 vaccines, we will learn if herd immunity can be achieved (NCIRS, 2020).

- Should I take paracetamol or ibuprofen before and after the COVID-19 vaccination?
 - Paracetamol or ibuprofen are not recommended routinely before or after vaccination. There is currently no evidence on the benefit of painkillers for the prophylactic prevention of immunisation injection pain or systemic reactions following COVID-19 vaccination. Paracetamol and ibuprofen can, however, be considered for the management of adverse events (e.g. pain or fever, respectively) if they occur after vaccination (ATAGI, 2021b).
- Can I get my influenza vaccine at the same time as my COVID-19 vaccine?
 - It is not recommended that any other vaccines be given within 7 days before or after a COVID-19 vaccine. (Healthdirect, 2020; ATAGI, 2021b)
- Will the vaccines prevent COVID-19 infection or just severe symptoms?
 - Vaccine developers are releasing announcements on the efficacy or effectiveness of vaccines in preventing COVID-19 symptoms and disease as soon as they are available. The results are very promising and indicate that the existing vaccines are statistically significantly effective (more than a coincidence) in preventing COVID-19 (NCIRS, 2020).
 - Data on the real-world effectiveness in preventing COVID-19 disease and symptoms and the duration of this protection will be gathered over the coming months and years (ATAGI, 2021b). It is difficult to give exact rates of efficacy as this depends on the population group receiving the vaccine such as their age and health status.
 - At this stage the vaccines have been shown to prevent severe COVID-19 disease, but it may still be possible to be infected with, and to transmit (spread) COVID-19 to other people. For this reason, it is important to be tested if you have any COVID-19 symptoms, even after you have been vaccinated.