

COVID-19 VACCINE

SCHOOL IMMUNISATION PROGRAM

The COVID-19 vaccine is now available for all people aged 12 years and over in the NT.

NT Health is working with the Department of Education and Leaders of the Independent Schools to provide the COVID-19 vaccine to students in NT schools through the School Immunisation Program during Term 3 and 4.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

— Is the COVID-19 Pfizer vaccine safe for children and young people?

All people in the Northern Territory aged 12 years and over are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

This follows a review of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for use in children aged 12-15 by medical experts, the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI), which has recommended its use for children to reduce the risk of severe illness if they contract COVID-19.

ATAGI has reviewed available data on the safety and efficacy of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine in children aged 12 to 15, the risk of COVID-19 in this age group, and evidence of wider benefits and risks of vaccinating children. ATAGI concludes that the benefits of offering COVID-19 vaccination to all younger adolescents aged 12-15 years outweigh any known or potential risks.

To read the full ATAGI Statement visit <https://www.health.gov.au/news/atagi-recommendations-on-the-use-of-covid-19-vaccines-in-all-young-adolescents-in-australia>

— Why should my child get the COVID-19 vaccine?

There are three key reasons why young people should get the COVID-19 vaccine including:

1. To protect themselves

The Delta Strain of COVID-19 is effecting young people, with young people becoming infected with COVID-19 in recent outbreaks across Australia. Many children and young people have experienced higher levels of illness compared to the Alpha strain.

2. To protect their elders

By getting the COVID-19 vaccine young people are able to protect their grandparents and other family members that may have chronic illnesses.

3. To get life back to normal sooner

Getting the COVID-19 will increase our vaccination rate in the NT, so young people can have more freedom to do the things they used to do before COVID-19 such as going on holidays and visiting interstate without the risk of hotspots and lockdowns.

— What vaccine will my child receive?

Medical experts from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) have recommended that children and young people aged 12 years and over receive the COVID-19 Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. Children and young people will need two doses of the vaccine, three weeks apart, to ensure the best protection.

— What can my child expect after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine?

As with any vaccine, your child may experience some side effects after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine. Side effects are normal and a good sign that the vaccine is working.

Common side effects include:

- pain, swelling, tenderness, redness or itching at the injection site
- tiredness
- headache
- muscle pain
- nausea
- fever and chills
- feeling unwell
- joint pain.

These side effects are usually mild and go away within one or two days.

If your child experiences any side effects, they can take paracetamol or ibuprofen. If there is swelling at the injection site, you can use a cold compress.

You should seek medical attention after vaccination if:

- You think your child is having an allergic reaction. Call 000 if they experience severe symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, wheezing, a fast heartbeat or collapsing.
- You are worried about a potential side effect or your child experiences new or unexpected symptoms.
- Your child has experienced a side effect of the vaccine that has not gone away after a few days.

For symptoms which are not urgent, you can see your regular healthcare provider.

— Can my child resume normal activities, including sports, after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine?

Most children experience mild side effects after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine which last for one to three days. These may include a sore arm, headache, fatigue and aches and pains. It is advised your child rests, takes paracetamol and reduces any activities as required. Any shortness of breath or chest pain after the vaccine should be reported to your doctor or clinic.

— Do children get COVID-19?

Children and young people are not naturally immune from the virus and can become infected with COVID-19.

In Australia, COVID-19 national data shows 13.4% of cases were in people aged 10-19 years between 1 January to 1 August 2021.

In New South Wales, data from the current Delta variant outbreak shows about 18% of cases were in the 10-19 years age group for the period 2 July to 19 August 2021.

Vaccinating children and young people is anticipated to contribute to a reduction in the transmission of COVID-19 to the rest of the Australian population.

— What are the benefits of my child receiving the COVID-19 vaccine?

Reducing disruption to education

- Vaccinating children and young people is anticipated to reduce any disruption to their education by preventing disease and reducing potential transmission and outbreaks in schools.

Protecting mental Health

- Prolonged absence from face-to-face learning in school can have considerable psychosocial and educational impacts on children, and vaccination of all adolescents, alongside the vaccination of school staff, offers benefit in mitigating against this.
- Vaccinating children and young people is also likely to result in less disruption to sports, other organised activities and socialising which are key to the physical and mental wellbeing of children and young people

Reducing disruption

- A reduction in the number and severity of outbreaks, resulting in lockdowns and subsequent school closures, will reduce disruption to the work of parents and family, with clear economic benefits.

— How long do I need to wait between getting the COVID-19 vaccine and another vaccine?

It is recommended you wait seven days between getting the COVID-19 vaccine and any other type of vaccine. It doesn't matter which vaccine you receive first.