

Fact sheet

Delta and COVID-19 Vaccination



This factsheet contains information about COVID-19 and vaccination for patients.

About the Delta strain

The current NSW outbreak is due to the Delta variant of the COVID-19 virus.

The Delta variant is estimated to spread more than twice as much as the original virus, and can cause more severe illness in those that do get it:

- The risk of being hospitalised for patients infected with the Delta variant is almost double that of those infected with the Alpha variant.
- Compared to other variants, people infected with the Delta strain are much more likely to be admitted to ICU and have a higher risk of death.

The delta variant may have slightly different symptoms from the original strain, and can include headache, sore throat, runny nose, fever and persistent cough.

Why get vaccinated?

Vaccines have been shown to be effective against COVID-19. Two doses of a vaccine:

- Reduces the chance you will be infected with COVID-19 by 50% - 60%.
- Gives you around 90% protection against hospitalisation and death from COVID-19 if you are infected.
- Significantly reduces the spread of COVID-19 to others, by at least half.

Even if you don't have symptoms or get sick, you can still pass the virus on to others. Getting vaccinated also helps to protect those you live with and the community.

Are vaccines effective against the Delta strain?

According to experts and evidence, COVID-19 vaccines are effective against severe disease and death from the Delta variant.

People who have received both doses of a vaccine are about three times less likely to be infected than unvaccinated people, and infections are usually mild.

Can I still get COVID-19 if I am vaccinated?

COVID-19 vaccines are a critical tool to keep people safe and bring the spread of the virus under control. However, no vaccines are 100% effective at preventing illness in vaccinated people.

A small number of people who are fully vaccinated will still be infected with COVID-19. These are called breakthrough cases.

Emerging evidence shows that the Delta variant causes a higher rate of vaccine breakthrough cases (19.7% compared to 5.8% for all other variants).

Vaccinated people who do get infected are equally infectious as non-vaccinated people, so it is important to continue to follow other health measures like wearing a mask once vaccinated.

However, the virus clears more quickly, and the disease is less severe for vaccinated people, so there is still a benefit to getting vaccinated.

Are COVID-19 vaccines safe?

All of the COVID-19 vaccines that are approved for use in Australia have strong safety profiles. To 8 August 2021, approximately 6.3 million doses of Pfizer and 7.4 million doses of AstraZeneca vaccines have been administered.

As with all medications, there are possible side effects associated with COVID-19 vaccines, but the chance of having an adverse reaction is extremely rare. Compared to the risk of acute and long-lasting illness from contracting COVID-19, the benefits of the vaccines are clear.

Blood clots

There is a small risk of blood clots associated with the AstraZeneca vaccine. In Australia, out of 7.4 million doses of AstraZeneca vaccine administered to date there have been 104 reports of blood clots linked to the vaccine, and 7 reported deaths.

Myocarditis and pericarditis

There have been some concerns with the Pfizer vaccine and adverse reactions that cause inflammation of the heart (myocarditis and pericarditis). Out of the 6.3 million doses of Pfizer vaccine administered to date, there have been 149 cases in Australia of suspected myocarditis and/or pericarditis. There have been no reported deaths.

According to the TGA, which monitors vaccine safety in Australia, the protective benefits of vaccination against COVID-19 far outweigh the potential risks. It is recommended that people 18+ or over get any available COVID-19 vaccine as soon as possible.

Will I need to get a 'booster' shot?

There is evidence of long-lasting immune responses in people who have received an AstraZeneca vaccine. Questions remain about the longevity of mRNA vaccines such as Pfizer and Moderna.

Studies are underway to better understand how long vaccines provide protection against COVID-19, as well as how well they protect against new variants. This evidence will help to inform whether a booster shot will be needed to maintain protection against COVID-19.

More information

In the first instance, you should discuss any questions or concerns about COVID-19 vaccination with your GP.

Further information on COVID-19 and available vaccines can be found at www.nsw.gov.au.