



# Primary Care Vaccine Roll-out

## Provider Bulletin

15 November 2022

*Bulletins provide you with regular updates and guidance on the COVID-19 Vaccine Program.*

### Key Messages

#### ATAGI UPDATE

##### No change to Booster Dose advice

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) has reviewed its booster dose advice (November 2022) for COVID-19 vaccines in the context of increasing case numbers in Australia and the emergence of the XBB and BQ.1 Omicron subvariants. ATAGI wishes to **provide the following updates**:

- ATAGI has made **no new recommendations at this time**, including **no changes to the number of COVID-19 vaccine booster doses** recommended.
- ATAGI emphasises the importance of remaining up to date with **recommended doses** of COVID-19 vaccines, especially for people aged 65 years and older and **those at higher risk** of severe COVID-19.

##### COVID-19 Pfizer Bivalent vaccine

Following the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) granting **provisional registration** for the Pfizer (Comirnaty) Bivalent Original/Omicron BA.1 (subsequently referred to as Pfizer bivalent) vaccine for use as a booster dose in people aged 18 years and older, ATAGI has provided the following **recommendations**:

- The Pfizer bivalent vaccine can be used as an alternative vaccine for **any booster dose in people aged 18 years or older**, according to the current **ATAGI recommendations for booster doses**.

- The booster dose of COVID-19 vaccine should be given at least 3 months after a persons most recent COVID-19 vaccine dose or previous COVID-19 infection.
- Co-administration of Pfizer bivalent vaccine with other non-COVID vaccines is acceptable, as per current [ATAGI clinical guidance](#).

Pfizer bivalent vaccine is **not recommended** for primary course of vaccination (first two doses in most people or first three doses in severely immunocompromised people).

- ATAGI does not currently recommend use of the Pfizer bivalent vaccine as a booster in anyone under 18 years as it is not registered for this age group.

The Australian Government has **accepted** advice from ATAGI and will include the Pfizer bivalent (**Grey**) in the COVID-19 Vaccination Program for boosters in people aged 18 years or older from **12 December 2022**.

All sites currently participating in the COVID Vaccine Program will be onboarded for **Pfizer bivalent (Grey)** across two Tranches, with the ordering window for the first tranche opening on Saturday 19 November 2022.

Onboarding letters will be issued shortly to participating sites.

### **COVID-19 Pfizer vaccine for children aged 6 months to 4 years**

Following the TGA approval of the Comirnaty (Pfizer) COVID-19 vaccine for use in children aged 6 months to 4 years, ATAGI has provided recommendations on the use of Pfizer in children aged 6 months to 4 years in certain **at-risk populations groups**.

ATAGI **recommends** the Pfizer 6 months to 4 years (**Maroon**) COVID-19 vaccine as a primary course of vaccination against SARS-CoV-2 for **children aged 6 months to 4 years** with severe immunocompromise, complex or multiple health conditions, or disability with significant or complex health needs.

This includes children with the following or similar conditions:

- Severe primary or secondary immunodeficiency, including those undergoing treatment for cancer, or on immunosuppressive treatments as listed in the [ATAGI advice](#) on 3rd primary doses of COVID-19 vaccine in individuals who are severely immunocompromised;
- Bone marrow or stem cell transplant, or chimeric antigen T-cell (CAR-T) therapy recipients;
- Complex congenital cardiac disease;
- Structural airway anomalies or chronic lung disease;
- Type 1 diabetes mellitus;
- Chronic neurological or neuromuscular conditions; or
- A disability with significant or complex health needs, such as severe cerebral palsy or Down Syndrome (Trisomy 21).

The **recommendation** is for 3 primary doses. The recommended interval between each dose is 8 weeks. Children with severe immunocompromise are also recommended to receive 3 primary doses.

There is no preference for either the Moderna 6 months to under 5 years or Pfizer 6 months to 4 years COVID-19 vaccine in high-risk children aged 6 months to under 5 years; however, completion of a primary schedule with the same brand of vaccine is recommended.

ATAGI **does not currently recommend** vaccination for children aged 6 months to under 5 years who are **not** in the risk categories for severe COVID-19. These children have a very low likelihood of severe illness from COVID-19.

The Australian Government has **accepted** this advice and will include the Pfizer (**Maroon**) vaccine for **children aged 6 months to 4 years** in the COVID-19 Vaccination Program from **16 January 2023**.

All sites currently participating in the COVID Vaccine Program who are administering Pfizer will be onboarded for **Pfizer 6 months to 4 years (Maroon)** across two Tranches, with the ordering window for the first tranche opening on Saturday 3 December 2022.

Onboarding letters will be issued shortly to participating sites.

## MODERNA BIVALENT ALLOCATION

### Moderna Bivalent (Blue/Green) allocation increase

For sites administering Moderna Bivalent (Blue/Green) your allocation will be increased to 200 doses per fortnight from **19 November 2022**.

If you have a need for additional vaccines, you can place an additional order in CVAS or contact the VOC on 1800 318 208 or by emailing [covid19vaccineoperationscentre@health.gov.au](mailto:covid19vaccineoperationscentre@health.gov.au)

## CHRISTMAS ARRANGEMENTS

### Ordering

With Christmas and the New Year fast approaching, practices are encouraged to commence planning for the number of vaccines needed from **mid-to-late December 2022 to mid-January 2023**. When ordering, please consider the additional stock and consumables needed to meet demand over the holiday period.

### Reporting a Cold Chain Breach (CCB), Vaccine Administration Error (VAE) or making a Clinical Enquiry over the Christmas Period

The Vaccine Operations Centre (VOC) will be closed between 3pm Friday 23 December 2022 and Monday 2 January 2023 inclusive. During this time you will be **unable** to phone the VOC to report a Cold Chain Breach, Vaccine Administration Error, or to make a clinical enquiry. Instead, the VOC should be emailed at [COVID19VaccineOperationsCentre@health.gov.au](mailto:COVID19VaccineOperationsCentre@health.gov.au), and detailed instructions containing further information required for reporting will be made available.

**If you need to report a Cold Chain Breach (CCB) incident** that has occurred, please isolate and store affected vaccines within appropriate cold chain requirements until the case has been assessed and you have been provided with advice, once the VOC reopens on 3 January 2023. Vaccines should be clearly labelled with **'DO NOT USE, DO NOT DISCARD'**.

If your site requires additional vaccines during this time, you may consider contacting a nearby COVID-19 vaccine provider and arrange for the transfer of excess doses. Please ensure correct cold chain practices are adhered to when transporting vaccines between sites. For further information on appropriate cold chain requirements, including advice on managing vaccines in a power failure and transporting vaccines between sites, please refer to the [National Vaccine Storage Guidelines 'Strive for 5'](#).

**If you need to report a Vaccine Administration Error (VAE) or make a Clinical Enquiry**, you can email the VOC at [COVID19VaccineOperationsCentre@health.gov.au](mailto:COVID19VaccineOperationsCentre@health.gov.au), and your case will be assessed, and clinical advice will be provided during VOC operating hours.

You may choose to refer to the [ATAGI clinical guidance on COVID-19 vaccine administration errors](#) document for advice on the management of a range of possible VAEs, including when a replacement (repeat) dose is recommended.

If you require urgent information about COVID-19 vaccines, the latest clinical guidelines can be found on the Department of Health and Aged Care [ATAGI clinical guidance for COVID-19 vaccine providers](#) webpage, or you can call the Coronavirus helpline on 1800 020 080 (open 24 hours, 7 days a week).