

Frequently Asked Questions

Mandatory Vaccination for Healthcare Workers

The information set out here relates to the Public Health Order which requires first dose Covid-19 vaccination by 30 September and second dose by 30 November or an approved medical exemption in the form required.

Some NSW Health staff are subject to other Public Health Orders requiring first dose vaccination from earlier dates. For more specific information, contact your Health organisation.

- Staff working in residential aged care are subject to a Public Health Order requiring first dose Covid-19 vaccination by 17 September.
- Staff who live in one of the 12 LGAs of concern in Greater Sydney are required to have received a first dose Covid-19 vaccination by 6 September 2021 if they are an authorised worker and leave their LGA of concern to attend work.

Why is mandatory vaccination being introduced?

COVID-19 vaccine is highly effective against severe illness, hospitalisation and death, and will help keep staff, patients and visitors safe from COVID-19.

NSW Health and other employers are required under Work, Health and Safety laws to implement “all reasonably practical control measures” to ensure the health and safety of staff.

Has a Public Health Order been made?

Yes. The Public Health (COVID-19 Vaccination of Health Care Workers) Order 2021 has been made.

Health care workers will need to have received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by 30 September 2021 and two doses by 30 November 2021 to continue to work for NSW Health or a Private Health Facility (licensed under the Private Health Facilities Act).

Have the vaccines been properly reviewed by regulatory agencies?

All vaccines available in Australia are approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) for safety, quality, and effectiveness. Vaccine scientists from around the world are working together to ensure that rigorous processes are followed, and no testing or ethical approvals have been bypassed. COVID-19 vaccines must meet the same high standards as any other vaccine approved for use in Australia.

Can I have the vaccine of my choice? Will it be available?

AstraZeneca (Vaxzevria) and Pfizer (COMIRNATY™) are the two COVID-19 vaccines currently available in Australia.

The type of COVID-19 vaccine that health care workers will be offered depends primarily on age, availability of vaccine, and whether a person has any of the specified contraindications to receiving a COVID-19 vaccine.

Is there vaccination information in languages other than English?

The [Australian Government has added translations](#) in 15 languages. Languages currently included are: Chinese, Simplified Chinese, Arabic, Vietnamese, Italian, Greek, Punjabi, Korean, Turkish, Bengali, Serbian, Khmer, Spanish, Hindi and Assyrian.

What if I have been vaccinated overseas?

Under the Public Health Order, vaccines that are provisionally approved by the TGA are accepted. The list of approved vaccines is available on the TGA website:

<https://www.tga.gov.au/covid-19-vaccine-provisional-registrations>.

What information will I be provided before receiving a vaccination?

You will be provided with the information you need to make a decision about receiving the COVID-19 vaccine. You will have the opportunity to ask questions at the time of your vaccination, and to understand the risks and benefits of vaccination. If you are not satisfied with the information you have received, you can ask for more information.

Whilst the NSW Public Health Order requires all NSW Health employees, volunteers, students and contractors to comply with the mandatory requirement for vaccination, you will not be forced to have the vaccine. However, those not willing to have the COVID-19 vaccine will not be able to continue their employment with NSW Health.

What about rapid antigen testing? Can I do that, instead of getting vaccinated?

No, rapid antigen testing is not an alternative to vaccination. If you have not been vaccinated against COVID-19 by the dates specified in the Public Health Order and you have not submitted a medical contraindication certificate, you will not be able to continue to work for NSW Health or a Private Health Facility (licensed under the Private Health Facilities Act).

Am I considered a healthcare worker?

The mandatory vaccination requirement will apply to all staff* working in connection with a health agency, including:

Public Health Organisations (Local Health Districts, Specialty Health Networks (SHNs), Pillars and Affiliated Health Organisations)

NSW Ministry of Health

Health Administration Corporation (HAC) entities, Ambulance Service, NSW Health Pathology, HealthShare, Health Protection, Health Infrastructure, Health Professionals Councils Authority (HPCA)

All staff working at a Private Health Facility (licensed under the Private Health Facilities Act) both private hospitals and day procedures

Students in clinical placements in private facilities.

*Staff includes employees, Visiting Medical Officers (VMOs), volunteers, contractors, and students. Work is defined broadly to cover employees, contractors, VMOs, visiting practitioners, volunteers and students undertaking clinical placements.

The Order does not include private primary care providers such as GPs. Disability workers and aged care workers are covered by different public health orders and have different requirements.

Are contractors, such as photocopier technicians or maintenance contractors coming on site to do work, required to be vaccinated as they are not NSW Health Staff?

The Public Health Order describes “work” as including work done under a contract of service or a contract for services, including work done by a visiting practitioner within the meaning of the Health Services Act 1997, work done as a volunteer or by or for a charitable organisation, work done by a student on a student placement, and work done on a temporary basis, including while acting in or filling an office or other role because of a vacancy or absence.

Will the private health sector be subject to the same requirements?

The Public Health Order directing mandatory vaccination will also apply to:

- All staff working at a Private Health Facility (licensed under the Private Health Facilities Act) both private hospitals and day procedures
- Students in clinical placements in private facilities.

How will NSW Health assist staff to meet the requirement?

NSW Health has already facilitated access to COVID-19 vaccination and the majority of NSW Health staff are vaccinated. NSW Health will continue to facilitate access to vaccination for staff who have not yet had an opportunity to be vaccinated or who now wish to be vaccinated and will also provide access to more information for staff as needed.

Can I get vaccinated in work time?

Please talk to your manager about when your appointment is so rosters can be managed accordingly and/or flexible working arrangements to accommodate absence can be discussed.

Those who are vaccinated in their own time can claim a 2-hour special leave payment on each occasion of COVID-19 vaccination.

In accordance with the Public Health Order, staff members who are unable to provide evidence that they have received a first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by 30 September cannot continue to work for NSW Health or a Private Health Facility (licensed under the Private Health Facilities Act).

What do I need to do?

You are encouraged to get your COVID-19 vaccination as soon as possible if you are not already vaccinated. You are encouraged to book now:

- NSW Health vaccination clinics and participating general practices and pharmacies across the state are open for COVID-19 vaccination bookings.
- You can also book by visiting the [Australian Government eligibility checker](#).

If there are no bookings available near you, please continue to visit the COVID-19 Vaccine Eligibility Checker as more vaccination appointments will soon become available.

- AstraZeneca walk-in clinic locations in Greater Sydney are also available at <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/health-and-wellbeing/covid-19-vaccination-nsw/astrazeneca-18-years-and-over>
- GP clinic bookings across NSW are available at [COVID-19 vaccine clinics - Search Results - HotDoc](#)
- A further list of NSW Health vaccination clinics in regional and rural locations is available at: <https://www.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/health-and-wellbeing/covid-19-vaccination-nsw/clinics-regional-and-rural>

You will be required to advise your workplace of your vaccination status and provide proof of your vaccination status if requested.

If you have medical concerns about being vaccinated, you need to speak to your doctor. You need to advise your organisation as soon as possible if you will not receive your COVID-19 vaccination by the proposed dates.

How do I book an appointment?

Appointments can be made in the first instance, via the [COVID-19 Vaccine Eligibility Checker](#) at a NSW Vaccination Clinic, GP or community pharmacy.

Health care workers living in one of the Local Government Areas (LGAs) of Concern can book a priority vaccination appointment via the [NSW Government website](#).

If you are unable to book a vaccination appointment before the required date, you may be able to access a health care worker vaccination appointment through one of the NSW Health Local Health Districts (LHDs). To do this, please contact the vaccination team at the LHD where you live or work. Proof of occupation (ID card or letter from employer) will be required to demonstrate eligibility. This also applies to Ministry, Pillars and NSW Ambulance staff.

NSW Health encourages staff to book an appointment at their nearest NSW Vaccination Clinic, GP or community pharmacy via the [COVID-19 Vaccine Eligibility Checker](#). If they are unable to book an appointment before the required date they may contact the vaccination team at their nearest LHD.

LHD vaccination team contacts

Local Health District	Phone contact	Email contact
Central Coast		CCLHD-COVAXHub@health.nsw.gov.au
Far West	1800 602 001	FWLHD-COMMUNITYVACCINATION@health.nsw.gov.au
Hunter New England	1800 570 575	HNELHD-COVIDClinicBookingChange@health.nsw.gov.au
Illawarra Shoalhaven	1300096365	ISLHD-BookingsCOVIDVaccinations@health.nsw.gov.au
Murrumbidgee		MLHD-COVID-19@health.nsw.gov.au

Mid-North West		MNCLHD-ConsumerRelations@health.nsw.gov.au
Nepean Blue Mountains		NBMLHD-COVID19@health.nsw.gov.au
Northern NSW	1800 438 829	https://nswlhd.health.nsw.gov.au/covid-19-vaccinations/
Northern Sydney		NSLHD-COVIDVaccinationEnquiries@health.nsw.gov.au
Sydney Children Hospitals Network		SCHN-EOC@health.nsw.gov.au
South Eastern Sydney		SESLHD-COVID19StaffVaccination@health.nsw.gov.au
Sydney		SLHD-COVIDVaxRegistration@health.nsw.gov.au
Southern NSW		SNSWLHD-Covid-Vax@health.nsw.gov.au
St Vincent's Hospital Network		svhnsccovid19@svha.org.au
South Western Sydney	1300 056 676	SWSLHD-EOC-CoVaxBookings@health.nsw.gov.au
Western NSW	02 6809 6221	WNSWLHD-Vaccination@health.nsw.gov.au
Western Sydney		WSLHD-COVIDVaccinationBooking@health.nsw.gov.au

I am pregnant or planning pregnancy. What should I do?

You can get vaccinated if you're pregnant, breastfeeding or trying for a baby. Pregnant women are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 and should get vaccinated now. Vaccination reduces the risk of severe disease during pregnancy and helps to keep you and your unborn baby protected from the virus.

How can I prove I have been vaccinated?

There are several options to receive your 'proof of COVID-19 vaccination':

- Download your COVID-19 digital certificate via the [Express Plus Medicare](#) mobile app or your [Medicare online account](#) through myGov.
 - You can add your COVID-19 digital certificate to your Apple Wallet or Google Pay.
 - Instructions are available on the [Services Australia website](#).
- If you can't get proof online, your vaccination provider may be able to print your immunisation history statement for you.
- Call the [Australian Immunisation Register](#) on 1800 653 809 (Monday to Friday 8am to 5pm) and ask for your statement to be sent to you. It can take up to 14 days to arrive in the post.
- If you're not eligible for Medicare, call the [Australian Immunisation Register](#) and request your certificate be mailed to you or add your COVID-19 certificate to your

digital wallet using the Individual Healthcare Identifiers service (IHI service) through [myGov](#).

- NSW Health employees can view their vaccination records through the Stafflink Employee Self Service screen to see if their records are already available.

Further information will be provided to Ministry, Health System Support Group and Pillar staff about proof of vaccination and how to seek a medical exemption.

Who should I send my vaccination record to?

Your vaccination records should be sent to your local Staff Health unit in Local Health Districts, Networks, eHealth, HealthShare, NSW Pathology and NSW Ambulance.

If you do not have a Staff Health unit, you will receive further advice

Further information will also be provided to the Ministry, Health System Support Group and Pillars staff about where to send proof of vaccination and where to send medical exemption forms.

I am concerned about the privacy implications of reporting my vaccination status. How will such information be held and what will my manager be able to see?

All vaccination information is securely stored in the NSW Staff Health vaccination database called VaxLink. Only authorised staff can view vaccination records.

Managers will be able to view their staff member's vaccination compliance status only.

Who can see my vaccination status?

All employees can see their own vaccination status by logging into employee self service in StaffLink. Managers can view the vaccination status by logging into manager self service in StaffLink: <https://www.healthshare.nsw.gov.au/staff-resources/stafflink>

What happens if I decide not to be vaccinated?

NSW Health is required to comply with the requirements of the Public Health Order and to manage risks associated with unvaccinated staff appropriately. NSW Health requires staff to comply with the Public Health Order. If you do not meet the COVID-19 vaccination requirement on the date it applies, or do not have an approved medical exemption, then you cannot continue to work within NSW Health or a Private Health Facility (licensed under the Private Health Facilities Act).

What happens if I cannot be vaccinated because of a medical reason?

An exemption to the Public Health Order requirement will only be considered if you are unable to be vaccinated against COVID-19 for a medical reason. You will only be granted an exemption if you have a medical contraindication(s) to all of the available COVID-19 vaccines, or you have another medical reason for a temporary exemption.

You will need to speak to your medical practitioner and ask them to complete a COVID-19 medical contraindication form. If you are seeking an exemption, you will need to provide the completed form to your employing organisation in time to allow sufficient processing time prior to 30 September 2021.

Will I have access to workers compensation if I suffer long term adverse effects from the vaccination?

An employee is able to lodge a claim for workers' compensation if they suffer an illness as a consequence of vaccination. The claim will be subject to all other criteria for a valid workers' compensation claim.

What is the process for applying for a medical exemption?

In accordance with the Public Health Order, your medical practitioner will need to complete the COVID-19 vaccine [medical contraindication form](#) and this needs to be submitted to a responsible person within your organisation. If you are seeking an exemption, you will need to lodge the required form with your organisation in time to allow sufficient processing time prior to 30 September, 2021.

Further information will be provided to Ministry, Health System Support Group and Pillars staff on where to send medical exemption applications.

What happens if my Doctor recommends a temporary exemption?

A temporary exemption may be granted for up to six months for people where clinically appropriate. For example, due to undergoing treatment causing temporary immunocompromise, or confirmed infection with SARS-CoV-2 within the last 6 months.

Can I seek an exemption if I am currently working remotely?

The Public Health Order requires you to have had your first vaccination dose by 30 September unless you have a medical contraindication. Unless you comply with the Public Health Order, and complete a first vaccination by 30 September 2021, you will not be able to do work for NSW Health unless you have been vaccinated against COVID-19, irrespective whether you are onsite or not.

What happens if my application for a medical exemption is approved? What does this mean for my ongoing employment, role etc.

You will continue to be able to work in your current role, noting that current control measures will continue to be in place. Where the nature of the medical contraindication could adversely impact your ability to perform your role safely, a risk assessment will be undertaken to address any concerns.

As more information becomes available on COVID-19 vaccines, the medical contraindication you currently experience, may not prevent you from receiving a COVID-19 vaccine in the future.

What happens if my application for a medical exemption is not approved?

Medical contraindications will only be accepted if they are in accordance with the [COVID-19 vaccine medical contraindication](#) form.

If you have a medical contraindication to a specific COVID-19 vaccine, you should discuss with your medical practitioner whether you are able to receive another COVID-19 vaccine.

The Public Health Order requires you to have had a first vaccine dose by 30 September 2021. If you do not have an approved medical exemption, you will be required to have a first dose of COVID-19 vaccine to continue working for NSW Health or a Private Health Facility (licensed under the Private Health Facilities Act).

What if I have had COVID-19 in the last six months?

A temporary exemption may be granted for people who have contracted COVID-19 in the last six months. You will need to have proof of recent COVID-19 diagnosis and speak to your healthcare professional about the best time to be vaccinated.

What leave is available if I have an adverse reaction to the vaccination?

You can access available sick leave if you experience any side effects to the vaccination.

What if I'm already on short-term leave when vaccinations are due?

If you are already on leave at the time vaccinations are due, you are still encouraged to get vaccination as this is in your best interest to protect yourself and your family. However, you are required to have had your vaccination(s) before you return to duty and will be required to provide evidence of your vaccination status prior to resuming duty.

I am currently on long term leave (eg. Maternity or long service leave). When am I required to have the vaccine? Can this be done prior to my return to work?

If you are already on leave at the time vaccinations are due, you are still encouraged to get vaccination as this is in your best interest to protect yourself and your family. However, you are required to have had your vaccination(s) before you return to duty and will be required to provide evidence of your vaccination status prior to resuming duty.

What happens if I am not vaccinated by the due date?

If you do not provide evidence of having had one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by 30 September 2021 and do not have a medical contraindication certificate you will be on unpaid leave until you have your first dose or have a medical contraindication certificate. You may be able to apply to access your accrued leave entitlements for a short time to enable you to get vaccinated.

Can I work from home if I have not received the first dose by the required date?

The Public Health Order requires you to have had your first vaccination dose by 30 September unless you have a medical contraindication. You will not be able to do work for NSW Health unless you have been vaccinated, irrespective whether you are onsite or not.

Will redundancy be offered to those who cannot continue to work in the system?

No, there are no roles being deleted as a result of requirement for vaccination.