



Australian Government



Primary Care Vaccine Roll-out

Provider Bulletin

31 March 2023

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

Key Messages

COVID-19 VACCINE SUPPORT FOR PRIORITY POPULATIONS

The Australian Government is continuing to support COVID-19 vaccination pathways (including via in-reach) for priority populations including residential aged care and people with disability in residential accommodation settings. Primary care providers will be key to the delivery of on-site COVID-19 booster vaccinations as residents become eligible.

The recommended interval between the last COVID-19 vaccine dose or confirmed SARS-CoV-2 infection and the 2023 booster dose is 6 months or longer (whichever is the most recent), regardless of the number of prior doses received. An additional COVID-19 booster dose is anticipated to address waning of protection against severe COVID-19 prior to winter and provide an increase in protection against severe illness in the targeted groups.

On 1 February 2023, the Government streamlined and increased the incentive payments for doctors, pharmacists and nurses to provide COVID-19 vaccinations off-site from their usual premises, including in-reach vaccinations in residential aged care and disability supported living accommodation. Please consider your capacity to assist with in-reach vaccinations so that these priority populations can receive the COVID-19 booster dose as soon as they are eligible.

As part of the booster dose rollout, Primary Health Networks (PHNs) will be contacting primary care vaccination providers over the next few months to assist residential care service providers to source appropriate vaccination services. If you have capacity to assist, particularly with in-reach services, please contact **your local PHN** to provide your details.

VACCINE UPDATES

Last orders of Moderna 6 months to 5 years (Blue/Purple) vaccine:

Final orders of the **Moderna 6 months to 5 years (Blue/Purple)** vaccine are due this week. The final ordering window for this vaccine type closes at 11:59pm (local time) Friday 31 March 2023. Please note, this vaccine should not be administered to new patients and should only be used to complete an already commenced primary course of COVID-19 vaccination for eligible patients. Children aged 6 months to 4 years who meet the eligibility requirements are still able to receive the **Pfizer 6 months to 4 years (Maroon)** vaccine, noting that a primary course of the **Pfizer 6 months to 4 years (Maroon)** vaccine consists of **3 doses**, given 8 weeks apart, **regardless of immunocompromise status**.

Moderna Bivalent (BA.4-5) 12 years+ (PFS)

Sites who have not been onboarded for **Moderna Bivalent (BA.4-5) 12 years+ (PFS)** are now able to request access through the Vaccine Access Requests functionality in CVAS.

- To submit a request, sites can log into the CVAS portal, navigate to the 'Manage Account' tab and click the 'Update Vaccine Access' button and follow the prompts.
- To help sites easily identify what vaccine products they currently have access to, when submitting a request there is a 'View Existing Vaccine Access' button. This button can be clicked to open a new tab, showing a summary of all vaccine products the site is currently approved to order.

Additional orders

Sites are now able to place additional orders for **Moderna Bivalent (BA.4-5) 12 years+ (PFS)** in CVAS.

A link will be visible on the Orders tab stating *'If you are running low on stock and require additional doses, you can Request an Additional Order'*. By clicking the *'Request an Additional Order'* link you can enter your requested vaccine product, number of doses and whether you require paired consumables to match the requested order.

Please note, if you have not yet placed an order for the requested vaccine product in your regular order cycle, you will be redirected instead to place an order through the New Order button in the Orders tab.

AstraZeneca Vaccine Expiry and Offboarding Reminder

All AZ vaccine doses expired on 20 March 2023. Please check your fridges to report any wastage in CVAS. The vaccines should then be disposed of as per existing state and territory guidelines for the disposal of clinical waste and schedule 4 medication. If there is a wastage event of 10 or more vials a Major Wastage Report will need to be completed in CVAS as soon as possible. If there are less than 10 vials, the reporting should be completed in the minor wastage section in the weekly Vaccine Stock Management Report **due no later than 9pm Friday this week.**

Once your site's stock on hand shows zero for AZ and all reporting has been completed in CVAS for this vaccine product, it will be deactivated on your behalf, unless you have already requested deactivation.

COVID-19 ORAL ANTIVIRALS

Expanded criteria

From 1 April 2023, the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) eligibility criteria for the COVID-19 oral antiviral treatment nirmatrelvir and ritonavir (Paxlovid®) will be expanded to individuals aged 60-69 years with one risk factor.

The expansion means that if an individual is 60-69 years and has particular conditions (e.g. diabetes, obesity, moderate to severe asthma) they may be eligible for PBS-subsidised Paxlovid.

The Government is encouraging individuals, including those aged 60 to 69 years, to have early discussions with their doctor or nurse practitioner about whether an oral antiviral treatment suits their health needs, and to develop a plan for if they should test positive.

From 1 April 2023, patients may be eligible for a PBS-subsidised prescription of Paxlovid if they test positive to COVID-19, and are:

- 70 years of age or older,
- 60-69 years of age with one risk factor,
- 50-59 years of age with two risk factors,
- First Nations person 30 years of age or older and with one risk factor,
- 18 years of age or older
 - with moderate to severe immunocompromise, or
 - who have been previously hospitalised from COVID-19 disease, and subsequently reinfected.

The PBS eligibility criteria for molnupiravir (Lagevrio®) remain unchanged. Patients may be eligible for a PBS-subsidised prescription of Lagevrio if they test positive to COVID-19, and are:

- 70 years of age or older,
- 50-69 years of age with two risk factors,
- First Nations person 30 years of age or older and with one risk factor,
- 18 years of age or older
 - with moderate to severe immunocompromise, or
 - who have been previously hospitalised from COVID-19 disease, and subsequently reinfected.

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Advisory Committee recommends that Lagevrio should be considered for use only if Paxlovid is contraindicated or otherwise unsuitable.

Further information about eligibility criteria, including links to the full list of risk factors, is available at www.pbs.gov.au and searching by drug or brand name.

SERVICE FINDER

Service Finder takes over the role of Vaccine Clinic Finder

The Vaccine Clinic Finder (VCF) website has been retired, as of this week. All COVID-19 vaccination services listed on the VCF have been automatically transitioned to the **Service Finder**, which has been relaunched on a new and improved platform.

The **Service Finder** is now the best place for consumers to easily find and book a COVID-19 vaccination appointment that suits their needs.

People can also use the **Service Finder** to find and book appointments with providers of over 300 other types of health service, including influenza vaccinations. The **Service Finder** is available in 16 languages.

What this means for you as a COVID-19 vaccination provider:

- All COVID-19 vaccination services that were listed on the VCF have been automatically transitioned to the Service Finder. You do not need to do anything.
- Please continue to maintain your vaccine service information via VCF Connect or Provider Connect Australia if you have transitioned.

VACCINE OPERATIONS CENTRE UPDATE

Call-back function

The Vaccine Operations Centre (VOC) 1800 customer service line (1800 318 218) now has a call-back feature. During peaks in call demand, you will be offered the option of receiving a call-back by the first available operator. These calls are made as a priority and you will not lose your place in the queue.

If you don't have time to wait on hold, please use this function when next calling the VOC.

Easter and ANZAC Day arrangements

The VOC will be closed for the Easter period from **3:00pm Thursday 6 April 2023** and will re-open **9:00am Tuesday 11 April 2023**.

VOC will also close on **Tuesday 25 April 2023** for ANZAC Day and will re-open **9:00am Wednesday 26 April 2023**.

Easter deliveries:

- No deliveries will be made on Friday 7 April 2023 or Monday 10 April 2023.

Anzac Day deliveries:

- No deliveries will be made on Tuesday 25 April 2023.

Orders:

- Delivery Acceptances and Stock on Hand reporting will still be due by COB Friday 7 April 2023. It is suggested that sites complete their reporting requirements **prior to 3:00pm Thursday 6 April 2023**.
- Sites will not be able to place further orders for vaccine until reporting requirements are met.

Reporting a Cold Chain Breach, Vaccine Administration Error or making a Clinical Enquiry

What should I do if there is a Cold Chain Breach during this time?

If you need to report a Cold Chain Breach (CCB) incident while the VOC is closed, please complete the [Cold Chain Breach Reporting Form](#) and email it to COVID19VaccineOperationsCentre@health.gov.au. The CCB will be assessed once the VOC reopens on Tuesday 11 April 2023.

Vaccines that have been in a CCB should be clearly labelled with '**DO NOT USE, DO NOT DISCARD**', isolated, and stored within appropriate cold chain requirements until the case can be assessed and clinical advice provided.

What should I do if more vaccines are needed?

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'](#).

What do I do if a vaccine administration error occurs during this time?

If you need to report a Vaccine Administration Error (VAE) or make a Clinical Enquiry, you should email the VOC at COVID19VaccineOperationsCentre@health.gov.au. The case will be assessed, and clinical advice will be provided when VOC reopens on Tuesday 11 April 2023.

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 National Coronavirus Helpline on 1800 020 080 (open 24 hours, 7 days a week).