



Winter Planning – COVID-19

Stakeholder Kit March 2023

Supporting people with disability

Version 0.4 – April 2023

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Overview

This stakeholder kit provides information and resources aimed at assisting disability support providers and organisations delivering services to people with disability to communicate the continued importance of preventative behaviours to mitigate the risks posed by COVID-19 particularly leading up to, and during the winter months. This is designed to help you locate shareable information, as it includes links to videos and factsheets. If there is an information gap, please let us know (DC_COVID19Response@dss.gov.au) and we will aim to fill it.

Everyone's responsibility

If you are an adult and it's been six months or longer since you had a COVID-19 vaccination or infection with COVID-19, you can book a 2023 booster today. It does not matter how many COVID-19 vaccine doses you have had.

During winter, Australia is likely to experience further waves of COVID-19 and influenza (the flu).

Vaccination protects individuals, family members, and people at greater risk in the community from severe complications of COVID-19 (and the flu).

The Department of Health and Aged Care has produced [a short video](#) highlighting the role all Australians can play in keeping people at greater risk safe from COVID-19.

Vaccines save lives – it's not too late to get a shot

- Vaccines reduce the risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19 by more than 80%
- Let's keep our experience of COVID-19 mild. Boosters are the best way to top up your protection against severe illness.
- It is easy and free to get vaccinated from your local health professional, GP or pharmacist.
- Some children aged 6 months to 4 years who are severely immunocompromised, or have disability, as well as those who have complex and/or multiple health conditions that increase their risk of severe COVID-19 are eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine.
- You can get the [flu and COVID-19 vaccine](#) on the same day.
- The latest information on COVID-19 vaccination is available from the [Department of Health and Aged Care](#).
- Regular updates are also provided through [Disability provider alerts](#).
- Information about COVID-19 vaccines for people with disability is available in [Auslan](#) and [Easy Read](#)

COVID-19 2023 Booster

Because vaccinations become less effective over time, a COVID-19 booster can help bolster immunity for optimal protection over winter.

- The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) **recommends** a 2023 COVID-19 vaccine booster dose for adults in the following groups, if their last COVID-19 vaccine dose or confirmed infection (whichever is the most recent) was 6 months ago or longer, and regardless of the number of prior doses received:
 - All adults aged 65 years and over
 - Adults aged 18-64 years who have medical comorbidities that increase their risk of severe COVID-19, or disability with significant or complex health needs.
- ATAGI advises the following groups should **consider** a 2023 booster dose if their last COVID-19 vaccine dose or confirmed infection (whichever is the most recent) was 6 months ago or longer, and regardless of the number of prior doses received, based on an individual risk benefit assessment with their immunisation provider.
 - All adults aged 18-64 years without risk factors for severe COVID-19
 - Children and adolescents aged 5-17 years who have medical comorbidities that increase their risk of severe COVID-19, or disability with significant or complex health needs.
- ATAGI advises that a booster dose is **not recommended** at this time for children and adolescents aged under the age of 18 who do not have any risk factors for severe COVID-19.

[Learn more about the recommendations for the 2023 booster here](#)

Assistance with booking a vaccination

Assistance for people with disability and their families, friends and providers is available through the **Disability Gateway**. You can call on **1800 643 787** between the hours of 8 am to 8 pm, Monday to Friday.

You can use the **Easy Vaccine Access** service – SMS Text ‘Hey EVA’ to **0481 611 382**. Learn more about [EVA](#).

Booking a vaccination in your own language

- i. You can call the **National Coronavirus and COVID-19 Vaccine Helpline** on **1800 020 080**. This is a free service.
 - ✓ People with disability, their families and carers should select Option 5
 - ✓ Disability workers should select Option 4
 - ✓ For information in a language other than English, select option 8.
- ii. The **Translating and Interpreting Service** is also available on **131 450**.
For people who are deaf, or have a hearing or speech impairment, call the National Relay Service on **133 677**.

Vaccination Clinic Finder

The [Service Finder \(healthdirect.gov.au\)](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au) is available to help find and book a COVID-19 vaccine appointment. When searching for a suitable appointment, the Vaccine Clinic Finder has icons to assist with accessibility needs.

- **Wheelchair accessible** - This location supports the needs of people who are using a wheelchair or have limited mobility.
- **No Medicare card needed** - People without Medicare can get a COVID-19 vaccine at this location.
- **No appointment needed** - Walk-ins accepted
- **Low sensory space available** - This location has a quiet room and/or low sensory space available.
- **Languages other than English** - Some staff at this location can communicate in the languages listed.

Your general practitioner or pharmacist can also deliver your COVID-19 vaccine.

COVID-19 2023 booster access for people with disability living in shared residential accommodation

We encourage disability and aged care service providers to work with people with disability where they need support to access vaccination and their existing primary health care providers.

All National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) providers have a responsibility to support NDIS participants to access timely vaccination, should they wish to be vaccinated. It is particularly important for providers to support planning for the delivery of COVID-19 and influenza vaccinations for people living in shared residential settings.

Providers can source COVID-19 vaccinations and winter doses through a variety of channels. See [information for disability service providers about COVID-19 vaccines](#) for details.

Disability service providers can also seek assistance from their local Primary Health Network (PHN) to find a primary care provider to undertake 2023 booster doses. Providers can find their local PHN on the [Department of Health and Aged Care website](#).

Consent for vaccination

Under the NDIS Code of Conduct, all NDIS providers and workers have an obligation to deliver supports and services in a safe manner. They also have an obligation to act with respect for individual rights to freedom of expression, self-determination, and decision-making in accordance with relevant laws and conventions.

Everyone has the right to decide to be vaccinated, including people with disability and NDIS participants. Many people need assistance to consider the options available to them for vaccination and disability service providers play an important role in supporting people to access information about vaccination in order to make a decision.

It is important that informed consent is given by the NDIS participant, with any necessary support to do so, or a person who is lawfully able to make decisions on their behalf, prior to vaccine administration. Information on what to do if a substitute decision maker says no to COVID-19 vaccination is available on [the Department of Health and Aged Care website](#).

Consent forms may assist with the administration of the consent process. The Department of Health and Aged Care has designed a sample [template](#).

COVID-19 oral treatments

Eligibility criteria for treatment has been expanded so that more people at risk of severe illness from COVID-19 can access life-saving oral antiviral treatments.

Timing is critical with taking oral treatment. COVID-19 treatments are most effective if started as soon as possible. If you are [eligible for COVID-19 treatments](#), talk to your doctor so you can access them quickly if you test positive.

It is important to start the medication within **5 days** of being diagnosed or developing symptoms.

- You will need to speak to your GP, nurse practitioner or pharmacist about getting a prescription for oral treatments.
- It is a good idea to plan ahead and have a conversation with your GP about the best options for you if you become sick with COVID-19. This includes looking into oral treatment. If there is a plan in place, it will be easier for you to access help if you need to isolate.
- Learn more about eligibility for [oral COVID-19 treatments](#), and about oral treatments for [COVID-19 and who is prioritised to receive them](#).

COVID-19 planning

It is recommended that people with disability develop their own personal plan of what to do in an emergency, including during a COVID-19 outbreak. An emergency plan covers how a person's support needs will be managed in an emergency.

This plan should outline the steps people with disability, their providers and carers will take together in the event of a COVID-19 diagnosis to ensure they continue to receive the support they need.

Collaborating 4 Inclusion has worked with the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care to develop a range of resources to help people with disability, and their families and carers, tailor a plan specific to their needs.

It is important that disability providers work with people with disability to establish a plan and keep it up to date.

Visit the [Collaborating 4 Inclusion](#) website for further information.

COVID-19 outbreak preparedness and management

In the event of a COVID-19 diagnosis, it can be overwhelming for the individual, carers, families and workers to know how to manage the situation. A [COVID-19 ready kit](#) is available to help make a plan for these situations.

The Communicable Diseases Network Australia has published [National Guidelines for the Prevention, Control and Public Health Management of Outbreaks of Acute Respiratory Infection \(including COVID-19 and Influenza\) in Disability Residential Services](#). These guidelines can help providers of disability residential services apply a risk-based approach to the prevention, identification and management of acute respiratory infection outbreaks.

The [NDIS Commission website](#) also provides information and guidance to help NDIS providers to meet their obligations under the NDIS Act in relation to COVID-19 and managing outbreaks.

The [NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators](#) provides further guidance for providers for meeting obligations for maintaining continuity of safe, quality supports for NDIS participants, including specific guidance for emergency and disaster management.

Personal Protective Equipment

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) protects the wearer from infection and helps stop the spread of COVID-19.

The [Department of Health and Aged Care](#) has information available to help you find out who should use PPE and how to use it.

For further information on supports available through the NDIS take a look at [Your health and safety](#).

COVID-safe behaviours

COVID-safe behaviours help protect you and those around you from COVID-19. You can be COVID-safe by wearing a mask, physical distancing and practicing good hygiene.

At any time, you can choose to wear masks in public areas to help protect your health.

When cases are increasing, it is recommended that everyone who can wears a mask in crowded indoor areas such as public transport, lifts and other high traffic areas. If you test positive for COVID-19, you should stay at home while you are sick. More information about COVID-safe behaviours can be found [on the Department of Health and Aged Care website](#).

COVID-19 and ventilation

Good ventilation remains an important consideration for indoor disability settings. The [Australian Health Principal Protection Committee](#) advises that increased airflow may limit the spread of COVID-19 in indoor environments, particularly in crowded, inadequately ventilated spaces where infected persons may spend time with others.

The World Health Organisation advises that the risk of COVID-19 spreading indoors may be reduced through well-designed, maintained and operational ventilation systems. Increased use of natural ventilation (such as enabling airflow through open windows) may provide the same benefits. Practical advice on how to improve indoor ventilation can be found on [the Victorian Government website](#).

Additional Information can be found on the [Ventilation factsheet | Disability Gateway](#).

The National Disability Insurance Agency has a range of COVID-19 measures for NDIS participants and providers. This includes the ability for eligible participants to purchase a portable air purifier through their NDIS plan funding. This will assist in improving air quality in key living areas and help to ensure continuity of supports. For more information see [Flexible low cost AT for support continuity | NDIS](#).

COVID-19 and Mental Health

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, physical distancing and isolation may cause feelings of anxiousness, stress and worry.

Mental health support is available for all Australians.

The following services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, anywhere in Australia:

- Lifeline - 13 11 14
- Beyond Blue - 1300 22 4636
- Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) - 131 450
- Kids helpline - 1800 55 1800
- Suicide Call Back Service – 1300 659 467

Visit the Department of Health and Aged Care website to [learn more about mental health support services available](#).

You can also access tips to help mental health from the [Council for Intellectual Disability](#).

Communication materials for First Nations peoples

The Department of Health and Aged Care has [a collection of COVID-19 vaccines communication materials](#), including social media content, posters and videos, for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and organisations.

Communication materials for Australians from Cultural and Linguistically Diverse backgrounds

The Department of Health and Aged Care has a range of translated products, in addition to [content in over 50 languages](#).

A range of vaccination videos have been produced in a wide range of languages, available on the [YouTube channel for the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care](#).

Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care YouTube

You can access useful information from the official [YouTube channel for the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care](#).

Here are a few useful videos:

- [COVID-19 Booster advice for high risk communities](#)
- [COVID-19 Reminder – Dr Michael Kidd](#)
- [COVID-19 Booster Advice](#)
- [COVID-19 Testing](#)

Australian Government Department of Health Facebook

The Department of Health and Aged Care regularly posts updates on its official [Facebook](#) site, including specific posts for people with disability and those who care for them.

Facts about COVID-19 – is it true?

With so much information available, it can be hard to get the facts. The Australian Department of Health and Aged Care have provided [facts on COVID-19 vaccines](#).

Here are some common myths and the facts about COVID-19.

Children and Teenagers

- [Children don't need to be vaccinated against COVID-19.](#)
- [Is my child eligible for a COVID-19 2023 booster?](#)
- [Do children 5-11 years only need one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine?](#)
- [Do adults and children who have had COVID-19 need to get vaccinated?](#)
- [Do kids need to get vaccinated if they don't get severely ill from COVID-19?](#)

COVID-19 vaccination

- [How long will the COVID-19 vaccine last once I have had two doses?](#)
- [Do I have to wait between getting the Influenza \(flu\) and COVID-19 vaccine?](#)
- [Were COVID-19 vaccines developed too quickly to be safe?](#)
- [Were COVID-19 vaccines rushed through approvals or given emergency use authorisations in Australia?](#)

COVID-19 vaccination side effects

- [The side effects of the vaccine are just as bad as having COVID-19?](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccines cause autism?](#)
- [Are COVID-19 vaccines not effective?](#)
- [Does injecting into the bloodstream instead of muscle cause TTS or myocarditis?](#)
- [Do COVID-19 vaccines contain a microchip or any kind of tracking technology?](#)
- [Can COVID-19 vaccines alter my DNA?](#)
- [Do COVID-19 vaccines cause autoimmune diseases?](#)
- [Do COVID-19 vaccines cause infertility?](#)

COVID-19 virus

- [Hot weather kills the COVID-19 virus](#)

Booking a vaccination

- [There are many ways you can book a vaccine appointment](#)

Additional Resources

The Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care has a range of resources to help spread the message on the importance of vaccination.

- [COVID-19 Vaccination Easy Read Resources](#)
- [COVID-19 Easy Read Resources](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccination – Disability provider alerts | Australian Government Department of Health](#)
- [Information for disability service providers about COVID-19 vaccines | Australian Government Department of Health](#)
- [Living with COVID-19 | Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care](#)

Maintaining a safe workplace – Mental Health

- [Mental Health | Safe Work Australia \(swa.gov.au\)](#)
- [Supporting you through the Coronavirus pandemic - Beyond Blue](#)
- [Disability discrimination | Australian Human Rights Commission](#)

Maintaining a safe workplace – exposure to COVID-19

- [NDIS Commission coronavirus \(COVID-19\) information | NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission](#)
- [Duties under WHS laws | Safe Work Australia](#)

Resources on Infection Prevention and Control

- [Infection Prevention Control](#)
- [National Guidelines for the Prevention, Control and Public Health Management of Outbreaks of Acute Respiratory Infection \(including COVID-19 and Influenza\) in Disability Residential Services](#)
- [Maintaining safe and effective infection control in disability settings](#)
- [HLTSS00083 - Infection Prevention and Control Skill Set](#)
- [Infection Prevention and Control eLearning Modules | Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care](#)