



Australian Government



# After your Comirnaty (Pfizer) COVID-19 vaccination

Last updated: 9 November 2021

## About the vaccine

Today you have received the **Comirnaty (Pfizer Australia Pty Ltd) vaccine**.

This vaccine can prevent people from becoming ill from COVID-19. The Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine does not contain any live virus, and it cannot give you COVID-19. It contains the genetic code for an important part of the SARS-CoV-2 virus called the spike protein. After getting the vaccine, your body makes copies of the spike protein. Your immune system will then learn to recognise and fight against the SARS-CoV-2 virus. The body breaks down the genetic code quickly.

## What to expect after vaccination

As with any vaccine, you may have some side effects after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine.

**Common** side effects after **Pfizer** include:

- pain or swelling at the injection site
- tiredness
- headache
- muscle pain
- fever and chills
- joint pain.

**Less common** side effects after **Pfizer** include:

- redness at the injection site
- nausea
- enlarged lymph nodes
- feeling unwell
- pain in limb
- insomnia
- itching at the injection site.



These side effects are usually mild and usually go away within one or two days. Some recipients will experience more significant flu-like symptoms from this vaccination compared to other common vaccinations and may require time away from normal activities. These symptoms may occur after either dose but are more common after the second dose.

If you experience pain at the injection site or fever, headaches or body aches after vaccination, you can take paracetamol or ibuprofen (note, ibuprofen is not recommended during pregnancy). These help to reduce some of the above symptoms (you do not need to take paracetamol or ibuprofen before vaccination). If there is swelling at the injection site, you can use a cold compress.

**Rare** side effects that have been reported after **Pfizer** are:

- severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis)
- myocarditis (inflammation of the heart muscle) and pericarditis (inflammation of the outer lining of the heart). Most reported cases have been mild and recovered quickly, although longer-term follow-up of these cases is ongoing. Cases have been reported predominantly after the second dose and predominantly in younger males (aged < 30 years).

You should seek medical attention after vaccination if you:

- think you are having an allergic reaction. Call 000 if you experience severe symptoms, such as difficulty breathing, wheezing, a fast heartbeat or collapsing
- have chest pain, pressure or discomfort, irregular heartbeat, skipped beats or 'fluttering', fainting, shortness of breath or pain with breathing
- are worried about a potential side effect or have new or unexpected symptoms
- have an expected side effect of the vaccine which has not gone away after a few days.

For non-urgent symptoms, you can see your regular healthcare provider (e.g. your GP).

### **Vaccine safety monitoring and reporting side effects**

You can report suspected side effects to your vaccination provider or other healthcare professional. They will then make a formal report on your behalf to your state or territory health department or directly to the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA).

If you would prefer to report it yourself, please visit the [reporting suspected side effects associated with a COVID-19 vaccine webpage](#) on the TGA website and follow the directions on the page.

### **COVID-19 testing after vaccination**

Some side effects from COVID-19 vaccination might be similar to symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g. fever). However, Pfizer does not contain any live virus and cannot cause COVID-19. You may not need to get a COVID-19 test or isolate:

- if you develop general symptoms like fever, headache or tiredness in the first two days after vaccination, and
- if you are sure that you don't have any respiratory symptoms (e.g. runny nose, cough, sore throat, loss of smell or loss of taste).

However, you should check the current guidelines in your state/territory for the most up-to-date information. This advice may change in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak in your local area. You may still need to get a COVID-19 test if you meet other criteria, for example if you are a close contact of a known COVID-19 case. If in doubt, seek medical assessment.

## Remember your next appointment

It is important that you receive two doses of the Pfizer COVID-19 vaccine for your primary course. These doses are generally given 3-6 weeks apart, but longer intervals may be recommended in special circumstances. The second dose is likely to prolong the duration of protection against COVID-19.

## Third dose for people with severe immunocompromise

Some people who are severely immunocompromised should have a third dose of the vaccine to achieve the same level of immunity as the general population. An mRNA vaccine (Pfizer or Spikevax (Moderna)) is preferred to Vaxzevria (AstraZeneca) for this third dose. Read more about [third doses of the vaccine](#).

## Booster doses

Booster doses are available to everyone 18 years and older. ATAGI recommends the Pfizer vaccine for booster doses.

You can book a booster dose if it has been 6 months or longer since your second dose of COVID-19 vaccine. Find out more about [booster doses](#).

## How is the information you provide at your appointment used

For information on how your personal details are collected, stored and used visit <https://www.health.gov.au/using-our-websites/privacy/privacy-notice-for-covid-19-vaccinations>