

COVID-19 vaccine truths

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Community

Why do I need a COVID-19 vaccination?

- Getting vaccinated builds our immunity to COVID-19 and helps stop the spread of the virus.
- This protects you, your friends, family and Elders. It lets you safely get back to the things you love doing.

Are vaccines safe?

- The COVID-19 vaccine is safe. More than 7 billion doses of vaccine have now been administered worldwide.
- If you have questions about COVID-19 or getting vaccinated, call the COVID-19 Aboriginal Infoline on **1800 312 911** or visit: coronavirus.vic.gov.au/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-communities-and-covid-19-vaccines

Can the COVID-19 vaccine give me COVID-19?

The COVID-19 vaccines we use in Australia – Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca – do not contain any live virus, so cannot give you COVID-19.

Can the vaccine hurt my DNA?

- COVID-19 vaccines have no effect on your bloodline, DNA, genetics or connection to spirit.
- All three of the vaccines used in Australia – Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca – deliver instructions to our cells to start building protection against the virus that causes COVID-19. However, the material never enters the nucleus (centre) of the cell, where our DNA is.

Does coronavirus survive in warmer weather?

There appears to be less spread of COVID-19 in some warmer weather. Research suggests that public health measures are easier to support in warmer temperatures – where windows are open, and people meet outdoors. However, while outbreaks tend to peak in winter, the virus can still spread in summer.

Are the effects of the vaccine reversible?

No. The way it gives you protection is not reversible, but the vaccine does not stay in your system. The vaccine trains your immune system to build protection from the virus by making antibodies (proteins that live in your body) that fight the COVID-19 virus. While the antibodies can remain in your system for a long time, the vaccine does not.

Will being vaccinated allow me to stop wearing a mask?

It depends where you are and what the current rules are for that place. Check coronavirus.vic.gov.au/coronavirus-covidsafe-settings for the latest updates.

Will the vaccine stop me spreading COVID-19?

No, but it makes you much less likely to do so. You can be fully vaccinated, but still carry the virus and/or experience mild symptoms. That is why it's important to still be COVIDSafe when you're out in public, or around community or Elders, by:

- washing hands
- keeping 1.5 metres away from other people (physically distancing)
- wearing a face mask when you can't physically distance.

The vaccine makes you much less likely to get seriously ill if you get COVID-19.

I don't know anyone who has gotten really sick from COVID-19

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are at higher risk of getting seriously ill with COVID-19 if they:
 - are aged 50 and over
 - have a pre-existing health condition, such as diabetes, asthma, heart and lung conditions, or immune problems.
- When families live under the same roof, it's harder to practise physical distancing and isolation, which increases the risk of spreading the virus.
- Younger Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can also get very unwell from COVID-19, but even if they don't, they may still put Elders, family and friends at risk.

Will the vaccine affect my ability to have children?

Among the thousands of studies already done, there is no evidence to show that COVID-19 vaccines affect fertility in men or women.

I want to get pregnant, or am pregnant - is the vaccine safe for my baby?

- Yes, you can get a vaccine if you're trying to become pregnant and at any stage of pregnancy, or while you are breastfeeding.
- The risk of getting seriously ill with COVID-19 is much higher for pregnant women and their unborn babies, who are also at greater risk of being born prematurely if their mother gets the virus.
- Getting vaccinated while pregnant or breastfeeding will protect you and may also give your baby some level of protection from COVID-19.

Can my child catch COVID-19?

Yes, but children are less likely to get seriously ill due to COVID-19 compared to adults. However, children can still become unwell and can pass the virus on to other members of their family, friends or community, especially the elderly and more vulnerable.

Will I feel any side effects from being vaccinated?

People can get side effects from any vaccination. With COVID-19 vaccines, some people have side effects, and some don't. It's normal to feel a bit unwell after vaccination, but usually only last for a few days.

It's common to feel mild symptoms like:

- pain or tenderness where you got the needle
- headache
- tiredness
- aches
- fever
- chills
- nausea
- vomiting or diarrhoea

If you think the side effects are lasting too long, or are too strong, call your doctor, or the Aboriginal COVID-19 Infoline on **1800 312 911**. Open 9am to 5pm, 7 days a week.

Can COVID-19 vaccines cause long-term side effects?

- We know about short-term side effects, and it's important to be aware of them. It's also important to know that vaccine safety is being closely monitored all over the world and there is currently no sign of any long-term side effects.
- There is much higher risk of long-term effects associated with getting seriously ill with COVID-19, including ongoing fatigue, memory problems, joint and muscle pain, depression, hair loss, lung and heart damage and scarring, and heart and kidney failure.

Does the vaccine cause blood clots?

- There have been some rare cases of blood clot reactions after some people received the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine. The rate was extremely low – about 1 in 100,000 – and affected young people more than those aged 60 or over.
- The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines use different methods from AstraZeneca of teaching our body to produce antibodies, which protect us from the virus. There is no increased risk of a blood clot from these vaccines.
- However, blood clots from the COVID-19 virus infection have an 8-10 times increased risk of occurring.

Has the vaccine been tested? Is there safety info on this?

- While the COVID-19 vaccines are fairly new, we have huge amounts of research and a good understanding of how vaccines affect us. Australia has very robust safety monitoring for all vaccines and medicines from the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA), the independent body that approved these vaccines.
- We now have almost 12 months of data, from all over the world. As of November 2021, more than 7 billion vaccine doses have been given worldwide.
- While the COVID-19 vaccines were created very quickly, none of the usual vaccine development or trial steps were skipped – they were just combined or done at the same time to save time.

I've already had COVID-19. Do I still need the vaccine?

- If you have had COVID-19, it is recommended you get your vaccine as soon as you are better. The vaccine is likely to improve your immune response even if you have already had COVID-19 and gained some natural immunity.
- The strength of natural immunity will also vary from person to person, and it's not known how long it might last.

Where can I get more COVID-19 vaccine information?

Read more vaccine information at coronavirus.vic.gov.au/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-communities-and-covid-19-vaccines.
For more information on current public health restrictions and the latest exposure sites, visit coronavirus.vic.gov.au.

For more information and resources for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, visit:

[COVID-19 information for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities | Coronavirus Victoria](https://coronavirus.vic.gov.au/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-communities-and-covid-19-vaccines)



Department of Health