



GUIDANCE

COVID-19- Managing Vaccinations in Community Pharmacies

22 April 2020

About this document

The following document provides guidance for those community pharmacies providing vaccination services during the COVID-19 measures and to support a community pharmacy's risk management practices. It is intended as a guide only and should be used in conjunction with [official government advice](#)¹.

Considerations for vaccinations during COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in additional considerations for how vaccinations are managed in community pharmacies. There are currently no published guidelines for how pharmacists should manage vaccinations throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Pharmacies should consider their own risk management, operational and business continuity plans when deciding whether they will provide vaccination services during the COVID-19 pandemic and follow available state and territory advice.

COVID-19 is transmitted between people through close contact and droplets, and the most effective preventative measures to reduce the risk of transmission are based on increased hygiene practices and social distancing between individuals where possible². The following are some considerations that your pharmacy may use to minimise the risk to staff and the public.

Screening of patients

Screen patients carefully for any current illness, including for the symptoms of COVID-19 such as fever, cough, shortness of breath or sore throat. Pharmacists may choose not to vaccinate patients that are 'at-risk' of COVID-19 or those who have had recent contact with other people that have COVID-19.

Pharmacies should consider the use of electronic vaccination screening forms and methods for signing consent forms that minimise the risk of virus transmission.

Cleaning and hygiene

Surfaces used in vaccination rooms should be thoroughly cleaned after each vaccination. This includes benches, seating, and door handles.

Schedule appointments with sufficient time in between to allow for cleaning and disinfecting and where multiple consult rooms are available, rotate the rooms to enable cleaning between patients.

¹ Australian Government Department of Health, 'Coronavirus (COVID-19) advice for the health and aged care sector', March 2020. <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-the-health-and-aged-care-sector>

² Australian Government Department of Health, 'How to protect yourself and others from coronavirus (COVID19)', March 2020. <https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/how-to-protect-yourself-and-others-from-coronavirus-covid-19>



National Secretariat

Level 2, 15 National Circuit, Barton ACT 2600
PO Box 310, Fyshwick ACT 2609
P: +61 2 6270 1888 • F: +61 2 6270 1800 • E: guild.nat@guild.org.au
www.guild.org.au

Minimise contact time with patients

Conduct pre-screening assessments in an area of the pharmacy where social distancing of 1.5m can be maintained and limit the number of people in the vaccination room (e.g. the patient and immuniser only, only one carer for a child/person needing assistance). This will minimise the time spent in the enclosed consultation room/area and time spent in close contact with the patient.

Please note that while the recommendation is to keep a physical distance from others apply, the Commonwealth and states and territories recognise that health care professionals may sometimes be in close proximity to patients in order to provide services, such as the administration of vaccines and therefore physical distancing requirements are exempted for health care facilities, including pharmacies.

Also note that the risk of transmission is minimal in the normal course of a vaccination service. The risk is greatest for close contacts, which is defined as someone who has been face to face for at least 15 minutes or been in the same closed space for at least 2 hours, as someone who has tested positive for the COVID-19 when that person was infectious³.

Follow your state and territory advice regarding any exemptions to vaccination service requirements including premises specifications and consider whether these may be appropriate for your pharmacy, such as drive through vaccination services.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Pharmacists may use their discretion as to whether they feel more comfortable using PPE when vaccinating during the pandemic. Ensure that you always follow the recommended hand hygiene protocols.

The World Health Organisation⁴ and the Commonwealth Department of Health⁵ currently do not recommend the use of any additional PPE such as gloves or masks when providing care to people who do not have symptoms of COVID-19.

Post Vaccination Care

Ensure there is sufficient space for patients to wait after having their vaccination, including adequate space for social distancing of 1.5m and no more than one person per four square meters. You may need to spread out your waiting chairs and schedule appointments appropriately.

UPDATE: 22 APRIL

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) has released a [statement on the duration of observation after vaccination](#) as a guidance in the context of minimising risk of COVID-19 infections at health care facilities. The guidance notes that the standard 15 minute observation period should be observed, and this remains the optimal protocol. However, where adequate social distancing at the vaccination location is not possible, a post-vaccination observation period of at least 5 minutes may be sufficient provided certain other criteria can be met.

Pharmacists are advised that most state and territory pharmacist-administered immunisation guidelines require people vaccinated in the pharmacy to remain under observation for 15 minutes after their vaccination. Pharmacists should consider their individual premises requirements and implement social distancing arrangements to meet this wherever possible.

³ New South Wales Health, 'COVID-19 (Coronavirus) close contact- what you need to know', March 2020.

<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/novel-coronavirus-close-contact.aspx>

⁴ WHO, 'Rational Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for coronavirus disease (COVID-19)', March 2020.

https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/331498/WHO-2019-nCoV-IPCPE_use-2020.2-eng.pdf

⁵ Commonwealth Department of Health, 'Coronavirus (COVID-19) advice for the health and aged care sector', March 2020

<https://www.health.gov.au/news/health-alerts/novel-coronavirus-2019-ncov-health-alert/coronavirus-covid-19-advice-for-the-health-and-aged-care-sector#using-personal-protective-equipment-ppe>

Note: The [Queensland Vaccination Standards April 2020](#) have been updated to include specific information for pharmacies where it is not practicable for consumers to remain on the premises for 15 minutes as a result of the social distancing requirements related to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

For the latest updates on the 2020 immunisation season, please visit [GuildED](#) or [Vaccination Services](#) on Guild's website.