



Australian Government
Department of Health

Deputy Secretary

Dear colleagues

I am writing to you about the recently announced COVID-19 Winter dose, as [recommended](#) by the expert Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) and the options available to you for providing vaccination opportunities to your residents and eligible workers.

To continue to protect those most at risk, ATAGI recommends **an additional COVID-19 vaccine dose** before winter for residents in aged care facilities. This recommended COVID-19 winter vaccine dose will bolster residents' protection from severe illness, hospitalisation or death from COVID-19 over the winter season.

ATAGI recommends aged care residents receive their COVID-19 winter dose **from four months after their initial booster dose**.

In special circumstances, individuals may be vaccinated at a shorter interval, such as in aged care facilities and remote communities, where some flexibility of the minimum interval may facilitate vaccination of a larger proportion of individuals. The additional booster dose should not however be administered less than three months from the initial booster dose.

As COVID-19 winter vaccine doses are available from 4 April 2022, I encourage you to start planning now. The options available for organising your COVID-19 winter dose clinics are:

1. Primary care providers as the key delivery channel for the COVID-19 winter dose

The key delivery channel for on-site vaccinations in residential care will be primary care providers.

You are required to work with your existing primary care provider to plan for delivery of COVID-19 vaccinations as residents become eligible.

If you require assistance in organising for a primary care provider to deliver your COVID-19 winter vaccine doses, I encourage you to contact your Primary Health Network as soon as possible.

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2. Aged care providers previously approved to administer COVID-19 vaccines

If you have been previously approved by the Commonwealth to conduct your own self-run onsite COVID-19 vaccination clinics you can opt to run your own COVID-19 winter dose clinics.

You can also opt to administer flu vaccinations at the same time, if authorised to do so by your relevant state or territory government. It is important to note that only the COVID-19 vaccination component will be covered under the provider's contract with the Commonwealth.

3. Commonwealth in-reach providers to conduct COVID-19 winter dose clinics.

If you are unable to secure a primary care provider to administer COVID-19 winter vaccine doses, either with a GP or pharmacist or through their Primary Health Network, you can request an in-reach Commonwealth COVID-19 winter dose clinic.

To be eligible for a Commonwealth COVID-19 winter dose clinic:

- a facility will need to have 10 per cent or more of their resident population requiring a COVID-19 vaccination and this equates to at least 10 residents in total.
- the minimum 10 per cent of residents requiring a vaccination can include those requiring a winter dose as well as a first, second or booster dose a COVID-19 vaccine. Doses can also be administered to staff, if required.

If a facility does not meet the above threshold and is unable to access any alternate means to deliver COVID-19 winter dose vaccinations, the facility can register interest for a Commonwealth in-reach COVID-19 winter dose clinic.

For those who meet the eligibility criteria, an [online registration form](#) is now available to request a Commonwealth in-reach COVID-19 winter dose clinic. Registration closes on 31 May 2022 and you are encouraged to register as soon as possible if a Commonwealth in-reach clinic is your required option.

Co-administration of COVID-19 winter dose and annual flu vaccination

ATAGI advises that COVID-19 winter doses can be administered **at the same time** as the annual flu vaccination. Co-administration of COVID-19 winter doses and influenza vaccines for residents is both clinically safe and administratively efficient.

In planning your winter vaccine programs, aged care providers are encouraged to:

- identify and optimise opportunities for co-administration of COVID-19 winter doses and flu vaccines where possible.
- not delay the administering of flu vaccines to residents if co-administration is not possible or is likely to delay flu vaccination.

Please note Commonwealth clinics will only deliver COVID-19 vaccines. Your facility will be required to make separate arrangements for administration of flu vaccines unless:

- you have a contracted commercial provider to administer your annual flu vaccinations, and this provider is also contracted by the Commonwealth to deliver in-reach COVID-19 winter dose clinics in your area
- this provider agrees at your direct request to administer both vaccine programs at the same time. You will be required to organise the flu vaccination component directly with that provider.

Supporting your residents

I attach a letter from the Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer to your residents. I would appreciate your assistance by providing a copy to your residents and their families as quickly as possible to support their understanding of the recommended COVID-19 winter dose. This includes ensuring family members and/or advocates of residents living with dementia receive a copy of this letter to encourage them to speak with their loved ones, no matter the stage of their dementia, on the benefits of the COVID-19 winter dose.

Supporting your workforce

To date, over 82 per cent of workers have now received their mandatory COVID-19 booster vaccination. The high rates of primary and booster vaccinations among workers continues to be instrumental in providing the safest possible environment for residents.

Please ensure your workforce is aware of your relevant state or territory public health order regarding mandatory booster vaccinations for workers and the timeline by which they are required. This is critical in ensuring continuity of safe, quality care to residents.

In addition to residents in aged care and disability accommodation, ATAGI recommends a COVID-19 winter dose for:

- adults aged 65 years and older
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 50 years and older, and
- people aged 16 years and older who are severely immunocompromised.

Please support your workers who may be considered vulnerable as defined by ATAGI, and to facilitate their winter dose vaccination along with your residents. The COVID-19 winter dose is voluntary only and is available for vulnerable people to strengthen and safeguard their own personal protection.

Yours sincerely



Michael Lye
Ageing & Aged Care

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