



Healthcare worker update – COVID-19 third dose vaccination reporting requirements

On 10 January 2022, a new Pandemic Order was made requiring Victorian healthcare workers to receive a COVID-19 third dose, recognising the critical role that vaccination plays in the safety of both the healthcare workforce and patients. Third doses are of particular importance when considering the emergence of variants of concern (VoC) such as the Omicron variant. The Order takes effect on Wednesday 12 January 2022 at 11.59pm.

Healthcare workers have a higher occupational exposure risk to COVID-19 in addition to providing care to many individuals who have a greater vulnerability to COVID-19 exposure. A COVID-19 third dose vaccine has shown to improve protection against COVID-19 and VoC and will play a crucial role in providing ongoing protection to the healthcare workforce, their families and loved ones, and to the patients for whom they care.

This further third dose requirement follows the previous direction that healthcare workers were required to be fully vaccinated by 15 December 2021 to enable them to continue to work, or to otherwise have received a medical exemption from an authorised medical practitioner.

Healthcare workers eligible to receive an additional COVID-19 vaccine by 12 January 2022 are required to receive a COVID-19 third dose vaccine by 12 February 2022.

Healthcare workers not yet eligible to receive an additional COVID-19 vaccine by 12 January 2022 are required to receive their COVID-19 third dose vaccine by 29 March 2022.

By 12 February 2022, all healthcare workers eligible to receive their COVID-19 third dose vaccine must provide evidence of their COVID-19 third dose vaccination status, or a medical exemption by authorised medical practitioner to be able to come to work.

Operators of healthcare settings must also keep a record of workers' third dose vaccination status, in line with the Pandemic Order issued.

The COVID-19 vaccine is safe, effective and free. To book an appointment, healthcare workers can call use the [state's online booking system](#) or call the Coronavirus Hotline on 1800 675 398 or contact a GP, pharmacy or community health service using the [Commonwealth Vaccine Clinic Finder](#). Healthcare facility operators are also encouraged to support their staff to access vaccination on-site if possible.

These measures are part of the Victorian Government's ongoing efforts to protect healthcare workers and patients from COVID-19 and ongoing VoC such as the Omicron variant.

Further information on the requirement for healthcare workers to be vaccinated can be found [here](#).

Appendix - Frequently asked questions

Which healthcare workers are required to receive a third dose vaccine?

A healthcare worker is a person (including a volunteer or student) that is employed or engaged as a contractor to perform work at a healthcare setting. These roles include:

- Direct Care and Interaction Roles
 - Medical practitioner, dental professional, nurse and midwife
 - Hospital in the Home (HITH) and residential aged care service (RACS) healthcare workers working within the service of a hospital or health service
 - Allied health professional (AHPRA-registered and Department of Health Classification)
 - Patient care attendant (PCA)
 - Registered Undergraduate Student of Nursing (RUSON) or Midwifery (RUSOM)
 - Phlebotomists and pathology worker
 - Lifestyle and social therapy
 - Formal language and interpretation service
- Administrative and Ancillary Roles
 - Administrative, clerical, and managerial worker, including their assistant's delegates
 - Food preparation, cleaning and laundry services
 - Patient service assistant (PSA), porter
 - Operating theatre technicians
 - Central sterile supply department (CSSD) staff and technicians
 - Security, maintenance and repair, information technology, gardening and landscaping
- Ambulance and Patient Transport Service Roles
- Workers in businesses operating within health facilities (e.g. cafés, restaurants, newsagents and florists within a healthcare setting).
- Frontline workers in hotel quarantine program

Students on placement at a healthcare setting and volunteers engaged to undertake duties at a healthcare setting are also required to be vaccinated including a third dose vaccine.

The requirement applies to those working at healthcare settings, not those that work at another worksite (such as head office where no health services are delivered, unless they are required to attend the healthcare setting where care is delivered) or in a community setting (such as providing care into people's homes) – unless they also work in a healthcare setting.

What healthcare settings are in scope?

Healthcare settings at which all healthcare workers will be required to receive a third dose vaccine are:

- Hospitals (including outpatient setting and in-reach services)
- Ambulance and patient transport services
- Community health centres and services (including community-based mental health services, maternal and child health services, and drug and alcohol counselling services)

- General practice settings
- COVID-19 related healthcare delivery settings, including testing sites, vaccination centres, and hotel quarantine
- Dental surgeries and practices
- Day procedure centres
- Health clinics (e.g. where health appointments are delivered by medical specialists, nurse practitioners and/or allied health professionals)
- Pharmacies
- Diagnostic and medical imaging centres
- Mobile health services
- Blood donation services
- Educational settings where health care students undertake placements and internships
- Health services embedded in other government agencies or sectors (e.g. healthcare workers providing services in correction settings)
- Businesses operating within healthcare settings (e.g. workers at the café/restaurant/newsagent/florist within a hospital)
- The Coroner's Court

Where can I find the Pandemic Order on third dose vaccination requirements?

The relevant Order is located on the Department's [website here](#).

The Order explains how the third dose vaccination requirements will apply to healthcare workers and healthcare facility operators.

All operators and workers are encouraged to review the pandemic order to understand the scope of healthcare workers required to receive their third dose vaccine as well as the limited exemptions that may apply.

All operators should now be confirming with their workforce whether they have received their COVID-19 third dose vaccination.

All workers should provide evidence to their employer of their most current vaccination status.

Do workers need to provide evidence of their vaccination status?

Yes. Workers should provide evidence of their most current COVID-19 vaccination status, or of an authorised exemption to vaccination, to their employer before 12 February 2022. This should include information in relation to whether they are eligible for a third dose.

Workers who are not yet eligible to receive their additional COVID-19 third dose vaccine by 12 January 2022, should provide evidence of receiving their third dose by 29 March 2022.

There are two ways workers can provide evidence of their vaccination status:

- Online [immunisation history statement](#) – this displays all vaccinations or medical contraindications and authorised exemptions, including COVID-19, that have been reported to the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR). All vaccine providers must upload vaccinations to the AIR.

- COVID-19 Digital Certificate from the [Australian Immunisation Register](#) - this is for individuals who have received all required doses of a COVID-19 vaccine in Australia, or who have a medical exemption.

Information is available for healthcare workers on how to prove their COVID-19 vaccination status, including step by step guides on how to get [Proof of vaccination](#) with or without a Medicare card.

What if a worker can't provide their Immunisation History Statement by 12 February 2022?

Some workers may be unable to produce their Immunisation History Statement if they were only vaccinated in the days leading up to the 12 February 2022 deadline. This could be because the vaccine provider has not uploaded the person's vaccination record to the Australian Immunisation Register.

If a worker is unable to get a copy of their Immunisation History Statement prior to 12 February 2022, they should:

- advise the operator of the relevant healthcare setting where and when they received their COVID-19 third dose vaccination, and
- provide alternate evidence such as proof of their third dose vaccination appointment or a signed declaration that they have received a third dose vaccination.

Workers must then provide a copy of their Immunisation History Statement or show their COVID-19 Digital Certificate as soon as possible.

Operators should record the worker as being vaccinated and having received their third dose but is responsible for following up to ensure the worker provides the required proof of vaccination.

What if a worker who is eligible to receive a third dose COVID-19 vaccine by 12 January 2022 cannot get a third dose vaccination on or before the 12 February 2022 deadline?

After 12 February 2022, employers cannot allow a healthcare worker who is eligible to have received a third dose COVID-19 vaccine and who has not provided evidence of their vaccination from entering their health facility.

Limited exceptions apply, such as in the event that the worker was unable to receive their booster dose by the relevant deadline because they were in isolation as either a close contact or because they had contracted COVID-19. Such workers may be permitted to work provided that they have a booking to receive their booster dose within one week of the end of their isolation period. Similarly, in the event of urgent or emergency situations, workers may be permitted to attend work provided that they are only present for the period of time necessary to respond to the urgent or emergency situation.

Workers are encouraged to seek the support of their employer to receive their third dose vaccine now. All providers must support their workers to access a COVID-19 third dose vaccine. Public sector healthcare workers are able to access half a day of special paid leave to receive their vaccination – see special paid leave FAQ below.

What if a worker who is not yet eligible to receive a third dose COVID-19 vaccine by 12 January 2022 cannot get a third dose vaccination on or before the 29 March 2022 deadline?

After 29 March 2022, employers cannot allow a healthcare worker who has not provided evidence of their vaccination information (this includes evidence of a medical exemption) from entering their health facility.

Workers are encouraged to seek the support of their employer to receive their third dose vaccine now. All providers must support their workers to access a COVID-19 third dose vaccine. Public sector healthcare workers are able to access half a day of special paid leave to receive their vaccination – see special paid leave FAQ below.

What do I need to know about exemptions to the requirement to be vaccinated?

Medical exemptions are possible in a limited number of cases. The Australian Health Protection Principal Committee (AHPPC) recommended medical exemptions align with the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation ([ATAGI clinical guidance on COVID-19 vaccine in Australia in 2021](#)).

Healthcare workers will need evidence from a medical practitioner about a medical exemption – a medical certificate or a letter on its own is not sufficient. If a worker is unable to receive a COVID-19 vaccine for medical reasons, their doctor needs to update their record on the Australian Immunisation Register to evidence their medical exemption. This recording will be reflected in their COVID-19 Digital Certificate

A healthcare worker the subject of a previous but expired medical exemption must provide a new valid medical exemption or commence and complete the three vaccinations in accordance with the ATAGI clinical guidance for receiving each dose.

Consistent with national approaches, the pandemic order does not allow exemptions on religious, political or personal grounds.

Operators of healthcare settings should carefully consider the formal pandemic order.

While individuals are personally responsible for complying with COVID-19 vaccination requirements, providers must also take reasonable steps to ensure non-compliant workers do not enter and remain at their facility.

Operators are encouraged to review information on the [Fair Work Commission](#) website which steps out COVID-19 vaccinations, workplace rights and obligations.

Am I able to access leave to receive a third dose vaccination?

All healthcare facility operators are expected to provide appropriate leave to healthcare workers to enable them to receive a third dose vaccination.

For staff in the public health system (Victorian health services and Ambulance Victoria), healthcare workers (including regular casuals) are entitled to time off to attend a COVID-19 vaccination appointment.

Employers may facilitate an employee's attendance at a vaccination site (including reasonable travel time) by providing access to paid time off for up to four hours or an equivalent payment at the employee's base rate of pay to attend a vaccination appointment. This payment is inclusive of reasonable travel time.

Employees who access up to four hours of paid time off should return to work as soon as possible after receiving their vaccination unless they suffer an adverse reaction (see below).

Further information on COVID-19 vaccination leave entitlements for Victorian public health workers is available at <https://www.vic.gov.au/vps-guidance-note-covid-19-vaccination-rollout>.

What if an employee experiences an adverse event after receiving a COVID-19 vaccine?

Employees may experience minor side effects after receiving the COVID-19 vaccination. There is some overlap between an expected adverse event following immunisation (AEFI) following the COVID-19 vaccination and the presenting symptoms of COVID-19. This can lead to uncertainty around requirements for testing and isolation in a person with symptoms following vaccination.

For staff in the public health system (Victorian health services and Ambulance Victoria), paid Special Leave can also be made available to an employee who suffers an AEFI that does not require them to isolate, but does result in them being unable to attend work because of the symptoms experienced.

To access paid Special Leave in this circumstance, the employee is required to provide evidence in accordance with the requirements described for Personal (Sick) Leave in the enterprise agreement covering the employee confirming that the reason for not attending work is due to an AEFI that does not require them to isolate. In this instance, paid Special Leave is capped at a maximum of two days per COVID-19 vaccination received, including where a 'booster' shot is received by the employee.

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Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.

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