

Information on COVID-19 Pfizer (Comirnaty) vaccine Last updated: 30/7/21

About the vaccine

Comirnaty (Pfizer Australia Pty Ltd) is a vaccine that can prevent people from becoming ill from COVID-19. Comirnaty 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, which causes COVID-19. The genetic code is then broken down quickly by the body. Vaccination is voluntary and free. You can discuss any concerns or questions you have about COVID-19 vaccination with your immunisation provider and/or your GP before you receive the vaccine.

Benefits of the vaccine

A very large clinical trial showed that Comirnaty is effective in preventing COVID-19. People who had two doses of Comirnaty were about 95 per cent less likely to get symptomatic COVID-19 than people who did not get the vaccine.

Protection against COVID-19 starts from about 2–3 weeks after the first dose. While one dose may give some protection, it may only last for the short-term. Two doses will give optimal protection. No vaccine is 100 per cent effective, so it is possible that you can still get sick from COVID-19 after vaccination. We do not know how long the protection from Comirnaty will last. We will learn more about this over time.

We currently do not know how effective COVID-19 vaccines are at preventing spread of the virus. This means that SARS-CoV-2 could potentially still infect a vaccinated person. Even if they have no symptoms or only mild symptoms they could still pass it on to others.

This is why it is important to continue other preventative measures like:

- physical distancing
- wearing a face mask
- hand washing
- COVID-19 testing and quarantine/isolation as required by your state/territory.

If you have been vaccinated with two doses of Comirnaty, you should still get a COVID-19 test if you have symptoms that meet testing criteria according to your local health authority (e.g. fever, cough, sore throat).

Who should not receive this vaccine

You should not receive this vaccine if you have had:

- anaphylaxis (a type of severe allergic reaction) or serious adverse event attributed to a previous dose of the vaccine
- anaphylaxis after exposure to any component of the vaccine, including polyethylene glycol (PEG)
- myocarditis and/or pericarditis attributed to a previous dose of the vaccine

Precautions for vaccination

People with certain conditions may need additional precautions such as staying for 30 minutes of observation after having their vaccine or consulting an allergy specialist. Tell your immunisation provider if you have had:

- an allergic reaction to a previous dose of a COVID-19 vaccine or to an ingredient of the vaccine
- anaphylaxis to other vaccines or to other medicines.
- confirmed mastocytosis with recurrent anaphylaxis that requires treatment.

If you have a bleeding disorder or you are taking a blood-thinning medication (anticoagulant), tell your immunisation provider. Your immunisation provider can help determine whether it is safe for you to have an intramuscular injection, and help decide the best timing for injection.

Special circumstances to discuss before vaccination

People with precautionary conditions for Comirnaty

People with a history of any of the following conditions can receive Comirnaty but advice should be sought from a cardiologist about the best timing of vaccination and whether any additional precautions are recommended:

- Inflammatory cardiac illness e.g., myocarditis, pericarditis, endocarditis in the past 6 months
- Acute rheumatic fever
- Dilated cardiomyopathy (for people under 30 years of age)
- Complex or severe congenital heart disease
- Severe heart failure
- Heart transplant recipients

People with weakened immune systems (immunocompromise)

People with immunocompromise includes those who have a medical condition that weakens their immune system. It also includes those who may be taking medications that suppress their immune system.

The Australian Government strongly recommends people with immunocompromise receive COVID-19 vaccination. Comirnaty is not a live vaccine. It is safe in people with immunocompromise.

People with immunocompromise, including those living with HIV, have a higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, including a higher risk of death.

We do not know if Comirnaty is as effective in people with immunocompromise compared to the rest of the population. It is possible that Comirnaty might not be as effective in people with immunocompromise as it is in the general population. It is important to continue other preventative measures such as physical distancing after vaccination.

Women who are pregnant or breastfeeding

Pregnant women should be routinely offered Comirnaty at any stage of pregnancy. If you are trying to become pregnant you do not need to delay vaccination or avoid becoming pregnant after vaccination.

Pregnant women with COVID-19 have an increased risk of severe illness and adverse pregnancy outcomes. Real-world evidence has shown that Comirnaty is safe for pregnant women and breastfeeding women.

If you are breastfeeding, you can have Comirnaty. You do not need to stop breastfeeding after vaccination.

People with a history of COVID-19

If you have had COVID-19 in the past, tell your immunisation provider. Your provider may advise to wait for up to six months after recovery before having a COVID-19 vaccine. If you have ongoing illness from COVID-19, discuss the best timing of vaccination with your treating doctor.

Ensuring the safety of Comirnaty

The safety of COVID-19 vaccines will be monitored continuously throughout the COVID-19 vaccination program.

There are reports of a very rare side effect involving blood clotting with low blood platelet count after receiving the COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca. The COVID-19 Vaccine AstraZeneca vaccine is made in a different way. There is no evidence of this condition being linked to the Comirnaty COVID-19 vaccine.

You can report suspected side effects to our Practice by calling reception on 3341 7244. We will then make a formal report on your behalf to QLD Health and 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 here aems.tga.gov.au

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 **Comirnaty** include:

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

Less common side effects after **Comirnaty** 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. 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 **Comirnaty** are:

- severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) • myocarditis and pericarditis. Most reported cases have been mild, self-limiting 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 • you have chest pain, pressure or discomfort, irregular heartbeat, skipped beats or 'fluttering', fainting, shortness of breath or pain with breathing • you are worried about a potential side effect or have new or unexpected symptoms • you have an expected side effect of the vaccine which has not gone away after a few days.

For symptoms which are not urgent, you can see your regular healthcare provider (usually your GP).