



## **Australian Government**

### **Department of Health**

**Chief Medical Officer**

Dear Aged Care Resident

I am greatly encouraged that 94 per cent of residents in aged care facilities have received their recommended booster dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. This has offered the best protection against the current wave of the more contagious Omicron variant.

Staying up to date with the recommended COVID-19 vaccinations will continue to protect you from the risks of serious illness, hospitalisation or death from COVID-19.

This is particularly important as we approach the winter season, and with the potential for new variants of COVID-19 to be introduced into the community.

The expert Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) recommends an additional COVID-19 booster before winter for residents in aged care facilities, along with other vulnerable groups considered at most risk from the impacts of COVID-19.

This includes people aged 65 years and older, people who are severely immunocompromised, people living in disability accommodation and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 50 years and older.

Noting that vaccination efficacy can reduce over time, the recommended COVID-19 Winter vaccine dose will bolster your immunity for optimal protection over the winter season.

From 4 April 2022, you can receive your COVID-19 Winter vaccine dose from 4 months after your initial booster dose. If required, ATAGI advise it is safe to receive your winter dose at a shorter interval, but no less than 3 months after your initial booster.

Your facility will now be planning its COVID-19 Winter Dose vaccination clinic for residents. This will include discussing the benefits of the winter dose with you, advising you on the timing of the clinic and seeking your consent to be vaccinated.

COVID-19 vaccinations are free, safe and effective.

Your facility's COVID-19 Winter Dose vaccination clinic will be delivered by:

- A primary care provider such as a visiting GP or pharmacist,
- An aged care provider approved to administer COVID-19 vaccines, or
- A Commonwealth in-reach clinic.

It is important to know that you can ask your facility to arrange for a visiting GP or pharmacist to administer your COVID-19 Winter dose as soon as you are eligible – you do not need to wait for a scheduled clinic at your facility.

It is anticipated this winter Australia will see an increase in respiratory viruses such as influenza, as well as COVID-19 cases.

In addition to the COVID-19 Winter vaccine dose, it is recommended that you receive your annual flu vaccination. Under the National Immunisation Program, people aged over 65 can receive the flu vaccination for free.

In some cases, you may also be able to receive your annual flu vaccination on the same day as your COVID-19 Winter vaccine dose. ATAGI advises that it is safe to receive both vaccines at the same time. Ask your facility if this can be arranged for you.

If you have any concerns, please talk to your doctor or other health professional about the benefits and risks of vaccination. You can also call the COVID-19 Helpline on 1800 020 080 (select option 3) for any questions about vaccination.

I thank you for your continued participation in the national vaccination program.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P Kelly', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Professor Paul Kelly  
Chief Medical Officer

4 April 2022