



# Mandatory vaccination of residential aged care workers

## Frequently asked questions

### **Why is vaccination mandatory for residential aged care workers?**

Reducing the risk of an outbreak in residential aged care facilities (RACF) is essential to help protect the health of staff and residents.

COVID-19 poses a significant risk for elderly people, who are most at risk of contracting the virus and more likely to suffer severe health consequences from the virus.

The Chief Health Officer recently approved [Public Health Act Directions \(WA Government website\)](#) making vaccinations mandatory for residential aged care facility workers, in line with the agreement of National Cabinet.

Vaccination against COVID-19 will help protect workers and residents at aged care facilities from contracting and spreading the infection, and from severe disease and death.

### **I am a residential aged care worker, what do I have to do?**

You must receive at least the first dose of a COVID-19 vaccine by 17 September 2021 to enter a residential aged care facility from this date onwards. All residential aged care workers, irrespective of age, are eligible to receive the Pfizer vaccine.

### **Does it apply to me?**

Yes. Mandatory vaccinations apply to full time, part-time and casual staff employed or engaged on behalf of the residential aged care facility (such as agency staff working onsite) including:

- Direct care workforce (nurses; personal care workers; allied health professionals, and allied health assistants)
- Administration staff (reception; management; administration)
- Ancillary staff (food preparation; cleaning; laundry; garden; maintenance)
- Lifestyle / social care (music/art therapy); Transport drivers collecting residents from RACFs for outings
- Volunteers engaged by the RACF
- Students on placement; and
- Medical practitioners who attend and provide care to residents, including ambulance officers.

This list is not exhaustive, and more categories of workers could be identified in the future.

## Is it mandatory for visitors and others to be vaccinated?

Vaccination is not mandatory but is strongly encouraged for any visitors entering a residential aged care facility (and not identified in the categories above).

## Is vaccination mandatory for sub-contractors or external workers attending a residential aged care facility?

Tradespeople and other external workers/contractors who are not directly employed by the RACF are not required to be vaccinated to enter the premises. However, if they are direct employees of the facility – for example an onsite maintenance person – they must be vaccinated. While not mandatory, it is strongly encouraged for the protection of all those working, residing or visiting the aged care facility.

## What if I can't get an appointment before 17 September?

All residential aged care workers are welcome as walk-ins into [community clinics \(HealthyWA website\)](#) without an appointment. GPs are expected to make a vaccination appointment for residential aged care workers within 7 days of a request. Some aged care providers will be holding in-reach clinics at the facility or arranging buses to community clinics.

## I'm a casual worker. Will I lose pay if get vaccinated during work hours, or become ill?

No. Casual workers who need to go offsite to get their vaccine are entitled to [financial support \(Australian Government website\)](#). There will also be paid leave for casual staff who become unwell after vaccination and do not have other leave entitlements.

## If I don't want to be vaccinated, can I apply for an exemption?

Personal exemptions will only be given in exceptional circumstances. They may be used to enable individuals and facilities to achieve mandatory vaccination.

**Temporary exemptions** will be informed by:

- The individual's **medical circumstances**. Individuals who believe they are eligible must see their GP. [Immunisation medical exemption criteria is available from the Australian Government \(Australian Government website\)](#).
- The individual's personal **non-medical conditions** (for example, person has been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 in another country using a vaccine that is not on the Australian TGA-approved vaccination list). These individuals should speak to their facility in the first instance and provide a copy of their immunisation history.
- The **facility's individual circumstances** (for example, with provision of a documented plan and timeline to achieve mandatory vaccination). Decisions on whether an extension will be approved will be considered on a case-by-case basis by WA's Chief Health Officer.

## What happens if I don't get vaccinated?

Being vaccinated will be a condition of working in a residential aged care facility. Residential aged care facility workers are required to provide evidence that they have been vaccinated to their employer, who must keep a record of this. This record must be available for inspection on request by an emergency officer, appointed under the *Public Health Act 2016*.

**This document can be made available in alternative formats  
on request for a person with disability.**

© Department of Health 2021

Copyright to this material is vested in the State of Western Australia unless otherwise indicated. Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part may be reproduced or re-used for any purposes whatsoever without written permission of the State of Western Australia.

[health.wa.gov.au](http://health.wa.gov.au)