



Australian  
Nursing &  
Midwifery  
Federation  
VICTORIAN BRANCH

# Newsflash

COVID-19 information for aged care members

Wednesday 8 September 2021

## COVID-19 URGENT UPDATE

### Private for-profit, not-for-profit and public aged care

### COVID-19 vaccination directive issued - all residential aged care facilities

The Victorian Chief Health Officer on 7 September published the directions regarding requirements for aged care workers to be vaccinated against COVID-19. These directions are consistent with every other state and territory across the country.

This is to be read in conjunction with the requirements already mandated by the Commonwealth Department of Health, but importantly the CHO direction sets out the exemptions that may apply and timeframes for complying. ANMF expects similar directions to be forthcoming in all other health sectors in Victoria in the coming weeks. Again, this is consistent thus far with the actions of other states such as NSW, Tasmania and WA.

## Worker obligations

**Between now and 17 September 2021** you must either:

- a) Provide your employer with evidence of a valid medical exemption; or
- b) have received at least your **first dose** of a COVID-19 vaccine, or:
- c) provide evidence that you have an appointment to be vaccinated **before 1 October 2021** and provide evidence that you have a booking before 15 November 2021 for your second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

Authorised by Lisa Fitzpatrick ANMF (Vic Branch) Secretary

**From 17 September 2021 through to 30 September 2021**, a worker who has not provided the evidence above may continue working but must:

- a) wear PPE of at least a surgical mask and face shield, and
- b) continue to be restricted to working at a single facility.

**From 1 October 2021**, your employers cannot allow you entry to the facility unless you have provided evidence of:

- a) a full COVID-19 vaccination of two doses, or
- b) one COVID-19 vaccination dose and a booking that will take place no later than 15 November, for a second dose; or
- c) a valid medical exemption

## Employer obligations

- a) **from 1 October 2021**, ensure workers who are unvaccinated or have not provided evidence of a valid medical exemption do not enter the facility.
- b) **From 15 November 2021** employers must ensure all workers entering the facility are fully vaccinated unless an exemption applies.

Employers must sight evidence of your COVID-19 vaccination status and keep up to date records of whether their employees have:

- a) had no COVID-19 vaccination
- b) had a partial COVID-19 vaccination
- c) had a full COVID-19 vaccination
- d) has a medical exemption evidenced by an authorised medical practitioner (see below).

Employers must also inform current workers of their obligations and inform applicants applying for a position of their COVID-19 vaccination requirements.

Penalties for non-compliance will apply to your employer in relation to their safety obligations.

Should a RAC facility fail to comply with the Direction, it could face a penalty of up to 600 penalty units (\$109,044).

If you refuse the facility operator's request to provide evidence of vaccination or a valid exemption the operator must prohibit your entry to the facility.

## Medical exemptions

If you are unable to be vaccinated due to medical issues you will be required to provide evidence to your employer from an authorised medical practitioner. This evidence must be from one of the following:

- a) a general practice registrar on an approved 3GA training placement
- b) a public health physician
- c) an infectious disease physician
- d) a clinical immunologist
- e) gynaecologist
- f) obstetrician
- g) a GP who is vocationally registered
- h) a GP who is a fellow of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
- i) a GP who is a fellow of the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine.

Your GP will be able to advise you if they meet one of the above criteria.

## Temporary exception

In limited circumstances temporary exceptions to the exemption can be approved by the operator of a RAC facility, in relation to:

- a) a worker whose work or duties at a RAC facility is necessary to provide for **urgent and unforeseen** specialist clinical or medical care of a resident.
- b) **unforeseen** circumstances where workers need to be deployed workers to fill vacancies to provide urgent resident care and the continue essential operations of the aged care service **and maintain the quality of care for residents.**

Workers with temporary exceptions will be required to wear PPE of at least a surgical mask and face shield.

The full Victorian Chief Health Officer directions are available via <https://bit.ly/3yS6nty>

# Frequently asked questions

## I have had my first COVID-19 vaccination – what am I required to do?

By 17 September you need to provide evidence that you have a booking that will take place between now and 15 November 2021 for your second dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.

## I have a valid medical exemption can I keep working?

Yes, provided you give evidence to your employer from an authorised medical practitioner before 1 October 2021.

## I haven't been vaccinated yet - what happens to me?

You have a window in which to be vaccinated, from 1 October 2021 your employer cannot allow you entry to the facility unless you have provided evidence of either:

- a) a full COVID-19 vaccination of two doses, or
- b) one COVID-19 vaccination dose and a booking that will take place no later than 15 November, for a second dose; or
- c) a valid medical exemption

In the interim you will be required to only work at one site and wear PPE of at least a surgical mask and face shield.

## Can I be penalised?

There are two circumstances where individual staff may be subject to a penalty of up to \$10,904.40 (60 penalty units) in relation to COVID-19 vaccination.

1. **False or misleading information** – you must not give false or misleading information or documents, or make false or misleading statements in respect to your vaccination status.
2. **False or misleading entries** – you must not make an entry in a document that is false or misleading, such as registering someone as having been vaccinated when you knew that was untrue.

It is a defence to the charge if you can prove that at the time at which the offence is alleged to have been committed, you believed on reasonable grounds that the information, statement or document was true or was not misleading.

As it is in the community more broadly, it is also an offence to refuse or fail to comply with a CHO direction and a penalty of up to \$21,808.80 (120 penalty units) applies depending on the nature of the failure or refusal.

**For further information read the Victorian Government 'Information for workers required to be vaccinated frequently asked questions' via <https://bit.ly/2VoPsBp>**

# Required COVID-19 vaccination aged care webinar

Friday 10 September 2021, 2pm - 3pm

This Victorian-specific webinar is designed to support the residential aged care workforce on priority COVID-19 vaccination and provide information on the state's public health order requiring vaccination.

Commonwealth Deputy Chief Medical Officer Professor Michael Kidd will host the webinar. Panellists will include Federal and Victorian Government, health department representatives and unions, including ANMF. Topics will include:

- why it is so important to get vaccinated against COVID-19
- how workers can access priority Pfizer vaccinations ahead of the 17 September deadline
- how workers will be supported to be vaccinated by their workplace and government
- some of reasons workers might feel hesitant about getting vaccinated and how they can feel more assured
- how required COVID-19 vaccination will apply in Victoria.

Email your questions to [VacTaskForceAgedCare\\_Comms@Health.gov.au](mailto:VacTaskForceAgedCare_Comms@Health.gov.au) any time before the webinar noting "VIC Webinar" in your subject heading. Participants can also submit written questions during the live webinar.

**Join from the event link (ANMF will send a reminder on Friday 10 September)**

<https://health-au.webex.com/health-au/j.php?MTID=mbb61f175bc52db55cd9828c6f2369cc8>

## ANMF vaccine science in the context of COVID-19 webinar

This webinar, presented by nurses and hosted by Federal ANMF, was presented on 26 August and is **available free to ANMF (Vic Branch) members until Friday 10 September 2021.**

The fast-moving pace of COVID-19 science both from disease progression and treatments has been hard to keep up with. Nurses and midwives are well-positioned to advocate for science and safety. In this webinar, Dr Jessica Stokes-Parish (RN, PhD) and nurse immuniser Romy Blacklaw present the safety processes, research, surveillance of adverse events (including data on safety so far) and the difference between COVID-19 vaccines.

Watch webinar via the Federal ANMF Continuing Professional Education (CPE) website - free until 10 September via <https://www.anmf.org.au/cpe>

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## Keep informed about the vaccines

Be informed about the latest accurate COVID-19 vaccine information from trusted sources as well as the latest on the roll out with these links:

1. Victorian Department of Health **COVID-19 Vaccines: your questions answered: webinar for healthcare workers - part 1** (10 June) <https://bit.ly/3fBbelQ> **part 2** (17 August) via <https://bit.ly/3D9LFJg>
2. Federal Government information about the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine <https://bit.ly/3eAGztR>
3. Federal Government information about the Pfizer vaccine <https://bit.ly/32Vry0w>
4. What happens after I am vaccinated? <https://bit.ly/3hTYI9u>
5. Australian Academy of Science – COVID-19 facts hub <https://bit.ly/3hXgl2C>
6. Therapeutic Goods Administration - <https://bit.ly/3uli9up>
7. World Health Organisation – vaccines explained <https://bit.ly/3vr6jjQ>
8. National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance <https://bit.ly/2QT6nK7>
9. Australian Government translated information about COVID-19 vaccines <https://bit.ly/3qRfEyc>
10. *On the Record* – COVID-19 vaccination FAQs answered <https://bit.ly/3ekLike>

### What if I need further advice or support from ANMF (Vic Branch)?

Contact Member Assistance via our online form: <https://www.anmfvic.asn.au/memberassistance>

### Got a colleague not receiving ANMF emails?

If you have an ANMF colleague who is not receiving these newsflash emails, please pass this on and let them know they can re-subscribe via <https://anmfvic.asn.au/resubscribe>

**ANMF Job Reps and Health and Safety Reps are encouraged to display this newsflash on their workplace noticeboard.**