

Friday 11 February 2022

CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

Update #71

**Third vaccination booking required by Saturday 12 February;
elective surgery limits to slowly ease and code brown to end**

New 12 March required third dose vaccination deadline requires evidence of a booking by 12 February

Your vaccination deadline depends on when you had your second dose:

12 March 2022 deadline – nurses, midwives and carers who had their second dose on or before 12 September 2021. By 12 February, you need to be able to demonstrate to your employer a third-dose booking appointment to receive the third dose prior to 12 March 2022.

12 March 2022 deadline – all residential aged care nurses and personal care workers. Previously these nurses and carers were required to have their third dose by 1 March.

29 March 2022 deadline – nurses and midwives working in hospitals and healthcare services who had their second dose after 12 September 2021 must have their third dose by 29 March 2022.

What if I can't demonstrate I have a booking prior to 12 March?

If you had your second dose on or before 12 September 2021, the new pandemic orders (which are not published yet) will require you to have a third-dose booking before 12 March. You will need to provide evidence of that booking to your employer by 12 February. ANMF believes that this is an unreasonable expectation and expects employers to be flexible about when the evidence of the booking is provided. The main aim is to have these eligible employees vaccinated by 12 March.

ANMF encourages members to make every reasonable attempt to make a third-dose booking via the links below.

Authorised by Lisa Fitzpatrick ANMF (Vic Branch) Secretary

ANMF welcomes the deadline extension which gives sensible consideration to the circumstances of thousands of healthcare workers who tested positive to COVID in January and February and still have symptoms. It is also an acknowledgement of the immense pressure the health and aged care sectors have been under.

However, given the changing advice and lack of published information on the official websites, ANMF is expecting the Victorian Department of Health and employers to show some flexibility and understanding of the changing information and requirements.

If your employer is demanding evidence of an appointment and you have been unable to secure one, submit an ANMF member assistance form for advice and support via <https://anmfvic.asn.au/memberassistance>

How do I book my third dose?

Federal Government 'find a clinic' (chemists and medical clinics) <https://bit.ly/3Eiz7yp>

Victorian Government hubs and pop ups <https://bit.ly/3dZjuC6>

The Federal Government has established additional vaccination hubs with priority bookings for aged care workers:

Doncaster - bookings via <https://bit.ly/3JfoQpO>

Hawthorn - bookings via <https://bit.ly/3LvyfLQ>

Williamstown - bookings via <https://bit.ly/3owkXVd>

Ballarat - bookings via <https://bit.ly/3JcidnT>

What are the medical exemptions?

You may be exempt if you had a medical contraindication to a previous dose. These are listed in the pandemic order via <https://bit.ly/3JhAYGv> (note that this order will be revoked and replaced with a new order not yet published).

As previously 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 who must also register the exemption with the Australian Immunisation Register. This evidence must be from one of the following:

1. a general practice registrar on an approved 3GA training placement
2. a public health physician
3. an infectious disease physician
4. a clinical immunologist
5. a gynaecologist
6. an obstetrician
7. a GP who is vocationally registered
8. a GP who is a fellow of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
9. a GP who is a fellow of the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine.

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

Can I have the vaccination if I have had COVID-19?

If you have had COVID-19, the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) says:

Individuals who have had prior COVID-19, including asymptomatic SARS-CoV-2 infection, still require completion of the above vaccination schedule, but can defer receipt of the next dose for up to four months following their infection. This recommendation has changed from the previous six-month interval. This does not mean you must wait for four months to have your next vaccination.

Read the ATAGI advice via <https://bit.ly/3Jh4Frm>

If you have contracted COVID-19 since your second vaccination, and are still having acute COVID-19 symptoms, and are concerned you may not be able to meet your deadline, contact Member Assistance via our online form: <https://www.anmfvic.asn.au/memberassistance>.

Can I access leave to have the vaccine?

Public sector members can access:

- four hours special paid leave to have the vaccine (including travel time)
- two days special paid leave if you are unwell following the vaccine.

The Victorian Department of Health's guidance states employers should give consideration to extending these entitlements to public sector casual employees.

These entitlements are included in the Victorian Department of Health's 'Coronavirus Guidance Note on Employment-Related Matters' – which provides advice on leave, including special paid leave, vaccination leave and redeployment.

This guidance (updated 1 January 2022) is available via <https://bit.ly/2UhDSU2>

ANMF strongly encourages local government, private and not-for-profit employers to follow the Victorian Department of Health's special paid leave guidance, but it is not enforceable.

Code brown alert to end on Monday 14 February

Victorian Health Minister Martin Foley announced on Friday 11 February that the pandemic code brown alert would end on Monday 14 February. Minister Foley said the health sector-wide co-ordination developed during the code brown would continue.

Elective surgery changes from Monday 14 February

Health Minister Martin Foley also announced graduated easing of elective surgery limitations from 14 February, as COVID inpatient case numbers and furloughed staff continue to trend downwards.

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The changes are:

1. metropolitan private hospitals can return to 50 per cent of all surgery and regional private hospitals to 75 percent
2. regional public hospitals can return to category 2 surgery depending on workforce availability
3. metropolitan services Peter McCallum Cancer Centre and the Royal Eye and Ear Hospital can resume all category 2 surgery
4. all other metropolitan public hospitals to continue only category 1 surgery

ANMF welcomes the careful easing of elective surgery limitations. We acknowledge the important work of our private acute members during this very difficult time who have assisted with the category one public sector work and in private aged care.

The increase from 50 to 75 per cent of normal capacity will be good news for regional communities. We must remember this is dependent on the availability of health professionals.

ANMF is also pleased that category 2 elective surgery can re-commence in regional Victoria and the Royal Eye and Ear Hospital and Peter McCallum Cancer Centre.

Our metropolitan hospitals have been hardest hit during the code brown and many services are still using surge workforce models which means student nurses and allied health workers are filling the workforce gaps. ANMF cannot support a return to business-as-usual elective surgery until all surge workforce models have ended and rosters reflect our legislated nurse/ midwife patient ratios.

Nurses and midwives must also be given an opportunity to recharge and recover from a traumatic few weeks which have compounded the impact of a horror two years.

Important COVID-19 links for nurses, midwives and personal care workers

ANMF continues to collate the important links all in one place, so you don't have to go looking. Please bookmark and check this page regularly – <https://anmfvic.asn.au/COVID-19>

Got a colleague not receiving ANMF emails?

Let them know they can re-subscribe via <https://anmfvic.asn.au/resubscribe>

Encourage your colleagues to join ANMF

Let them know they can join via <https://www.anmfvic.asn.au/join>

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

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