



# SHICC PUBLIC HEALTH BULLETIN #23

**Wednesday, 11 May 2022 16:00 Hours**

This bulletin has been authorised by the **A/Deputy Incident Controller – Public Health, Dr Sharon Nowrojee**

## COVID-19 case and vaccination numbers

- **Summary:** as of **Wednesday, 11 May**, in Western Australia (WA), there have been:
  - **490,899** confirmed cases of COVID-19 notified
  - **421,833** people recovered from COVID-19
  - **3,554,845** COVID-19 PCR tests conducted
- **WA:** [Daily snapshot](#), [Vaccination dashboard](#) and [WA COVID-19 data update](#)
- **National:** [Current National Status & Australia's vaccine roll-out](#)
- **Worldwide:** [WHO Situation Reports](#) and [WHO Dashboard](#)

## Living with COVID

### Chief Health Officer advice

The latest advice from the Chief Health Officer is available [here](#).

### Mandatory vaccination booster dose

A person who has been diagnosed with COVID-19 is exempt from receiving a booster vaccination required under the mandatory vaccination [policy](#) for a period of four months from the date of their infection, subject to certain conditions. This aligns with the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) [advice](#) that people who have had COVID-19 should delay any further COVID-19 vaccine doses for three months after infection.

Refer to the Mandatory vaccination for workers [FAQs](#) on the Department of Health [website](#) and the [Direction](#) on [WA.gov.au](#) for more information.

### WA Health resources

In response to the change in public health and social measures (PHSMs) and the current COVID-19 environment, a variety of WA Health resources have been updated. Some remain in review and will be updated in due course.

Everyone is encouraged to refer to the [Department of Health](#) and [HealthyWA](#) websites regularly to ensure you have the most up-to-date advice.

### Hospital discharge guidelines

The *COVID-19 Guidelines for public hospital discharge and inter-hospital transfer of positive or suspect COVID-19 cases* (the guidelines) have been updated. The guidelines are available on the Department of Health [website](#) (within the 'Clinical guidelines' accordion).

## Workplace guidance update

COVID-19 guidance for business and industry has been updated in response to the current COVID-19 environment.

The [WA Health TTIQ Plan](#) and supporting industry-specific advice has been updated.

This includes guidance for education settings, meat processing, congregate living, industrial, mining/offshore, and secure facilities.

Refer to the Department of Health [website](#) regularly for the most up-to-date information.

## COVID-19 and voting

The Australian Electoral Commission has advised that [early voting options](#) are available to people affected by COVID-19 in the upcoming federal election on Saturday 21 May 2022.

Everyone is encouraged to consider the different ways to vote and plan how they will cast their vote if they are required to isolate on the day of the election.

## Masks in healthcare settings

Masks remain [mandatory](#) in high risk settings for people aged 12 years and over, including healthcare settings in places where patients have access.

Healthcare setting means a public or private health facility where health care is primarily delivered via face-to-face services provided to residents, patients, clients and others. Masks are not mandated for healthcare settings that do not have face-to-face interaction with patients (including telehealth services, pathology laboratories and corporate areas within health facilities).

The changes described above represent the minimum public health and social measures (PHSMs) required. Individual hospital and healthcare sites are free to impose additional restrictions as appropriate to their settings.

Everyone is encouraged to consider wearing a mask, even if it's not mandatory, particularly if physical distancing is not possible.

Refer to [HealthyWA](#) for additional face mask information.

## Visitor guidelines

The *COVID-19 Visitor Guideline for WA Public Hospital and Health Services* (the guideline) has been [updated](#). Visitors to hospitals are required to register, and wear masks while on hospital premises.

All patients will be permitted a total of two standard or essential visitors, at any time.

Visitor testing will continue as per current testing regimes in the *COVID-19 Framework for System Alert and Response (SAR)*.

Refer to the Department of Health [website](#) for the most up-to-date advice.

## SAR

The [SAR](#) has been updated to reflect the updated visitor guideline. Changes include advice regarding patient testing and screening, including for inpatient surveillance. The dental guidance has also been updated to allow routine dental care to be carried out in Red alert level.

The SAR level (Red) has not changed.

## Free RATs for close contacts

Close contacts are now entitled to 10 free rapid antigen tests (RATs) to help meet [testing requirements](#).

People with **no symptoms** are required to verbally confirm if they are a close contact to access their 10 free RATs at Perth metro and regional locations listed on [WA.gov.au](#). They may also collect RATs for other close contacts in their household. People in regional WA can access the free RATs

Close contacts **with symptoms** must **not** attend the collection locations and must follow the relevant [requirements](#).

Refer to the [initial](#) and [regional](#) announcement for more information.

## COVID-19 vaccination program

### WA reaches 80 per cent third dose vaccination milestone

Last week WA recorded an 80.1 per cent third dose COVID-19 vaccination coverage for Western Australians aged 16 years and older, the highest rate of all state and territories and a major achievement for WA.

Vaccine Commander Gary Dreiberger said he was proud of the outstanding work of all the health professionals and support workers who had helped achieve this result.

"I know there is still more work to do in some regional and remote parts of the State, particularly in our Aboriginal communities, where we continue to spread the message of protecting culture and community," he said.

Vaccinating children aged 5-11 years also continues to be a focus for WA, as this age group is still catching up after starting later in the vaccination program.

### COVID-19 vaccination clinics to co-administer flu vaccines for eligible people

From Monday 16 May 2022 eligible people will be able to receive a free [influenza vaccine](#) when receiving their COVID-19 vaccination at state-run COVID-19 vaccination clinics. Those eligible are:

- Children aged 5-11 years
- Adults aged 65 years and older
- People with high-risk medical conditions aged 5 and older
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Pregnant women
- Residents of aged care or disability care facilities
- Individuals experiencing homelessness/rough sleepers.

This year it is more important than ever to get vaccinated for influenza and COVID-19. Getting infected with both COVID-19 and influenza at the same time can result in serious illness and hospitalisation.

### Free flu vaccinations at COVID-19 vaccination clinics for WA Health staff

From next week WA Health employees can attend any COVID-19 vaccination clinic to get their free influenza vaccination.

Staff can walk into a clinic and show their WA Health ID to receive their free influenza vaccine.

While the influenza vaccination is not mandatory, employees are strongly encouraged to be vaccinated to help protect patients and colleagues within the health system.

More information is available for WA Health staff [here](#).

## mRNA COVID-19 vaccination dose intervals

On 27 April 2022, ATAGI [recommended](#) the dose interval between primary doses of mRNA COVID-19 vaccines be extended to 8 weeks.

The dose interval for the two-dose primary course of mRNA COVID-19 vaccines was previously:

- 3 to 6 weeks for Comirnaty (Pfizer)
- 4 to 6 weeks for Spikevax (Moderna).

The extended dose interval of 8 weeks has been shown to improve the immune response to vaccination and may improve effectiveness; and a longer dose interval may also reduce the risk of myocarditis and pericarditis.

The longer dose interval is particularly recommended for groups at higher risk of this side effect (people under the age of 40 years).

The dose interval can be reduced (to a minimum of 3 weeks for Pfizer or 4 weeks for Moderna) for people at higher risk of severe COVID-19 (including older adults and people with underlying medical conditions), in an outbreak setting or before international travel.

ATAGI advised the risk of myocarditis and pericarditis following Nuvaxovid (Novavax) vaccine is unknown, but vaccine providers could consider extending the interval between two primary doses of Novavax to 8 weeks (from a minimum of 3 weeks) to possibly improve effectiveness and reduce potential risk of myocarditis and pericarditis.

## COVID-19 vaccination post infection

ATAGI updated [advice](#) about when people who have had SARS-CoV-2 infection should receive a subsequent COVID-19 vaccine dose.

It is now recommended that all people should wait for 3 months after confirmed COVID-19 infection before they receive their next COVID-19 vaccine dose.

The next scheduled dose should then be given as soon as possible after this period. **People required to be vaccinated under the mandatory vaccination policy should refer to the [FAQs](#) for additional information.**

Waiting for a 3-month period after infection before COVID-19 vaccination is intended to optimise protection for that person as a longer gap between infection and vaccination is likely to lead to a better immune response and result in longer protection from reinfection.

This change in recommendation applies to all people eligible to receive COVID-19 vaccination (i.e., from 5 years and above), regardless of how many COVID-19 vaccine doses they have received.

It does not apply to other vaccines (for example, influenza vaccinations) which can continue to be administered as usual.

The updated advice reflects the lower risk of reinfection with the Omicron variant within the first 3 months following a confirmed infection, particularly if prior COVID-19 vaccine doses have been received.

It also recognises the Delta variant is no longer circulating in Australia and in the past 3 months Omicron has been the dominant variant.

This advice may change if future variants emerge and ATAGI will continue to review the evidence on protection from vaccination and infection and may update advice if required, including if a new variant emerges or another circumstance arises to cause COVID-19 vaccination to become more urgent.

## Vaccine information and resources

Please visit the sources below for more information and resources related to vaccines:

- HealthyWA – [COVID-19 vaccine](#) (for WA community), including [FAQs](#)
- WA Health – [COVID-19 vaccination program](#) (for WA health providers)
- Australian Government – [COVID-19 vaccines hub](#)
- Australian Government – COVID-19 vaccine [fact sheets and guides](#)
- Keeping Culture Safe and Strong Aboriginal - COVID-19 [vaccination resources](#)
- Australian Government – COVID-19 vaccination [Easy Read](#) resources
- ATAGI [infographic](#) on COVID-19 vaccines and doses recommended for each age and population group

## Directions updates

COVID-19 State of Emergency [Declarations](#) and community [advice](#) webpages summarise the latest COVID-19 Directions in place in WA. Further information can be found on the WA Government [website](#).

### New Directions

- [Maritime Crew Member Directions \(No 9\)](#)
- [Remote Aboriginal Communities Directions \(No 5\)](#)
- [Temporary Exemption of Class of Persons Under Paragraph 29 of the Booster Vaccination \(Restrictions on Access\) Directions \(No 2\)](#)

## Updated factsheets

- [What to do if you are a COVID-19 Case Version 8](#)
- [Rapid Antigen Tests FAQs Version 7](#)
- [Mandatory Vaccination for Workers FAQs Version 8](#)
- [Guide to Getting a COVID-19 Test at a State-run Clinic Version 2.3](#)
- [WA COVID-19 TTIQ \(Test, Trace, Isolate and Quarantine\) Plan Version 3](#)
- [Guidance for the Management of COVID-19 in the Workplace Version 2](#)
- [COVID-19 Response Checklist Abattoirs and Meat Processing Facilities](#) – Updated 6 May 2022
- [COVID-19 Response Checklist Congregate Living Facilities](#) – Updated 6 May 2022
- [COVID-19 Response Checklist Schools and Early Childhood Education Settings](#) – Updated 6 May 2022
- [COVID-19 Response Checklist Industrial Facilities](#) – Updated 6 May 2022
- [COVID-19 Response Checklist Mining and Offshore Facilities](#) – Updated 6 May 2022
- [COVID-19 Response Checklist Secure Facilities](#) – Updated 6 May 2022
- [WA COVID-19 Healthcare Worker Furloughing Guidelines Version 4](#)
- [COVID-19 Guidelines for Healthcare Practices in the Community Version 3](#)
- [COVID-19 Guideline for Management of Acute Behavioural Disturbance Version 3.1](#)
- [COVID-19 Guidelines for Public Hospital Discharge and Inter-hospital Transfer of Positive or Suspect COVID-19 Cases Version 4.1](#)
- [Testing Criteria for SARS-CoV-2 in Western Australia #38](#)
- [COVID Transition: Information for the Maritime Industry Version 3](#)
- [Disembarkation for Marine Crew Requiring Dental Care](#)
- [Disembarkation for Marine Crew Requiring Medical Care](#)

## Testing

### General population testing criteria

The *Testing Criteria for SARS-CoV-2 in Western Australia #38* has been published on the Department of Health [website](#) under the 'testing' accordion.

Any person may be tested if they have any one of the following clinical criteria: fever ( $\geq 37.5^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) **OR** history of fever (e.g. night sweats, chills), without a known source **OR** acute respiratory symptoms (e.g. shortness of breath, cough, sore throat, runny nose) **OR** acute loss of smell or taste **OR** **an inconclusive rapid antigen test result**.

### Testing locations

Testing locations are listed on [HealthyWA](#).

### Reporting

Notify suspected COVID-19 cases by completing the notification form [online](#) or by printing the notification form (standard notifiable infectious diseases process should be followed).

COVID-19 positive rapid antigen test (RAT) results **must** be registered on the HealthyWA [website](#) or by phoning 13 COVID (13 268 43).

## Series of National Guidelines (SoNG)

The latest iteration was released on 22 March 2022.

## Business and industry

### Resources for more information

- [WA Department of Health](#) and [HealthyWA](#)
- [WA Department of Health Media releases](#)
- [Australian Department of Health](#)
- [Advice for the public \(WHO\)](#)
- [Advice in other languages](#) and [Translated Resources](#)
- [Advice and resources for Aboriginal people](#)
- [Covid Clinic walkthrough](#) – in multiple languages
- [Contact registers](#) information
- [SafeWA user guide](#)
- [ServiceWA user guide](#)
- [Mandatory vaccination](#) Directions and supporting documents
- [Mandatory vaccination general and industry-specific](#) [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Proof of vaccination](#) [Directions](#), [information](#) and [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [COVID-19 in the workplace](#) – Information for employers and employees
- [Posters, signage and resources](#) for businesses

## More information

- COVID-19 Clinic ONLY Test Results Enquiry Line: 1800 313 223 (Note: NOT for GP referred testing or private pathology clinic tests)
- COVID-19 WA Public Information Line: 13 268 43 (13 COVID)
- COVID-19 WA Police Line: 131 444 to report breaches of quarantine, business activities, border controls and other State of Emergency Directions

**Next advice** The Bulletin is issued weekly. Next issue: **18 May 2022**.

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

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