



# Clinician alert #70 – all clinicians

Effective from 16 November 2021

## Anaphylaxis and COVID-19 vaccines

- Anaphylaxis to the COVID-19 vaccines is a rare occurrence.
- Most cases of anaphylaxis occur within 30 minutes of vaccination.

## Guidance

**People with the following can be safely vaccinated in primary care or community clinic settings with a post vaccination observation period of 15 minutes:**

- History of allergy or anaphylaxis to food, drugs, venom or latex.
- Allergic conditions including asthma, atopic dermatitis (eczema), or allergic rhinitis.

People who have a history of allergic reaction to a non-COVID-19 vaccine are able to receive an mRNA vaccine.

There is no evidence that people with allergy and other immune system disorders are at any greater risk of COVID-19 vaccine allergy than the general population.

**People with the following should be assessed for vaccination suitability by an immunologist or specialist vaccine safety clinic:**

- History of anaphylaxis or generalised allergic reaction to one of the ingredients contained in the COVID-19 vaccine to be administered.
  1. Polyethylene glycol (PEG), also known as Macrogol, is a potential allergen contained in both Comirnaty (Pfizer) and Spikevax (Moderna).
  2. Polysorbate 80 is a potential allergen contained in Vaxzevria (AstraZeneca).
- History of confirmed mastocytosis with recurrent anaphylaxis that requires treatment.

Note: PEG is contained in many medications and checking the ingredients of the patient's current/previously tolerated medications is helpful because it may exclude allergy to PEG.

## People with allergic reactions following a Covid-19 vaccine

People who have experienced:

- anaphylaxis to a COVID-19 vaccine  
or
- immediate (within 4 hours) generalised symptoms of a possible allergic reaction (e.g. urticaria/hives) to a COVID-19 vaccine

should be reported to [Western Australian Vaccine Safety Surveillance \(WAVSS\)](#). Review in the specialist immunology vaccine safety clinic will be arranged prior to any additional dose.

Further detailed information is available at [The Australasian Society of Clinical Immunology and Allergy \(ASCIA\) Guide: Allergy and COVID-19 Vaccination](#).

## Preparing for and managing anaphylaxis

- Before and during each vaccination session, providers should check that up-to-date protocols, equipment, medicines and trained staff to manage anaphylaxis are available. Refer to the [Preparing for vaccination section of the Australian Immunisation Handbook](#)
- Should symptoms of anaphylaxis occur, immediate treatment should be provided. Refer to [anaphylaxis management](#).

Anaphylaxis can involve multiple organ systems, including respiratory, cardiovascular, skin and gastrointestinal. This [table](#) lists signs of anaphylaxis. The [Australian Immunisation Handbook](#) also lists clinical features that help differentiate vasovagal episodes from anaphylaxis.

## Anaphylaxis and requests for medical exemption from COVID-19 vaccination

- Anaphylaxis to COVID-19 vaccines or vaccine components are accepted reasons for exemption.
- Anaphylaxis to one type of COVID-19 vaccine typically does not preclude vaccination with another vaccine. If there is a high risk of an allergic reaction to one of the vaccines (e.g. known allergy to PEG or Polysorbate 80), it is usually possible to have an alternate vaccine which does not contain the ingredient.
- A patient must meet criteria for exemption for **all** the COVID-19 vaccines available for use in Australia in order to be medically exempted from COVID-19 vaccination.
- A history of a previous allergic reaction to a non-COVID vaccine, including influenza vaccine, is not a contraindication to receiving an mRNA COVID-19 vaccine.

## Referral information

Referrals can be made via the [Central Referral Service](#) to the Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital (SCGH) adult (16 years and over) Immunology Vaccine Safety Clinic OR Perth Children's Hospital (PCH) Infectious Diseases Clinic (15 years and under). Specialist clinicians provide comprehensive consultations and individualised advice either face-to-face or via telehealth appointments. Vaccination under supervision may be facilitated where deemed clinically necessary.

PCH Specialist Immunisation Clinic also provides services for:

- Children with complex immunisation requirements, such as those whose high-risk medical conditions who require individualised immunisation plans.
- Children who have experienced or who are at risk of an adverse event following immunisation.
- Children and adolescents with severe needle phobia or those who are unable to be vaccinated in the community.

The Metropolitan Communicable Disease Control (MCDC) call line 9222 8588 can provide guidance about general (not booking or adverse event reporting) COVID-19 vaccine queries.

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