

5 August 2021

Dear Parents and Carers

Today we were given more information about the NSW Health Year 12 *Pfizer Priority Program*. This program provides vaccinations for Year 12 students or students 16 years and over in the other grades completing at least one HSC subject in 2021 and who live or go to school in one of the 8 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of concern.

The LGAs included in the program are Liverpool, Fairfield, Canterbury/Bankstown, Cumberland, Parramatta, Blacktown, Georges River and Campbelltown.

For schools in the relevant LGAs, students who are eligible to receive the vaccine will be transported by bus **from the school** to Qudos Bank Arena. This will be organised by NSW Health. There are COVID-safe plans in place when travelling to and from Qudos Stadium as well as when they are there. Those who live in the 8 LGAs, but go to school outside these LGAs will need to make their own way to the Qudos Bank Arena Vaccination Centre. We will share more information about how these students can register shortly.

Students will receive the COVID-19 Pfizer vaccine as it is the preferred vaccine for those aged 12 to 18 years. They will need two doses of the vaccine, 5 to 6 weeks apart. Information about the second vaccination will be provided by NSW Health.

Vaccinations are strongly encouraged but not compulsory. For those who would like to join this vaccination program, the school will need to provide the mobile phone number of each student who is eligible and will then forward this to NSW Health who will contact the student to make an appointment. **If you do not wish this mobile number to be provided to NSW Health to support participation in the vaccination program, please contact the school by 10.00am on Thursday 5 August at [stjohnpaul2@parra.catholic.edu.au](mailto:stjohnpaul2@parra.catholic.edu.au)**

*Just a reminder that at this time, the vaccine is only available to students sitting at least one HSC subject this year (regardless of the grade they are in). They must also be aged 16 years and above. The school must be located in one of the 8 Local Government Areas (LGAs) of concern or the student must live in one of those LGAs.*

We will continue to keep you updated as we know more. Thanks again for your patience and understanding as we continue to respond to COVID-19 together.

Kind regards



Jim Fanning  
Principal

## Invitation for current HSC school students in eight Local Government Areas of concern to receive the COMIRNATY™ Pfizer COVID-19 vaccination

NSW Health, the Department of Education, the Non-Government School Sector and your school are working together to ensure HSC students and Year 12 students who are completing school in 2021, and who go to school or live in the eight Local Government Areas (LGAs) of concern in Greater Sydney are vaccinated as a priority group. The COVID-19 vaccination is one of the best ways to protect you against COVID-19 and reduce the transmission of the virus.

You are eligible for the vaccination if you are:

- Aged 16 years and above

### **AND**

- Enrolled to sit one or more Higher School Certificate subjects (or otherwise completing year 12 in 2021, including Year 12 TAFE) at a school located in Liverpool, Fairfield, Canterbury/Bankstown, Cumberland, Parramatta, Blacktown, Georges River or Campbelltown LGA **OR** have a permanent home address in one of the above LGAs but attend school elsewhere

If you are eligible, you can receive two doses of the COMIRNATY™ Pfizer COVID vaccine 6 weeks apart. Information about your second vaccination will be provided to you by NSW Health after your first dose.

First dose priority vaccination appointments at the Qudos Bank Arena NSW Health Vaccination Centre will be available between 9 – 14 August 2021. Vaccination times will be allocated based on your school and transportation options from the school will be coordinated by NSW Health and NSW Transport. Timetables for buses to and from Qudos Arena will be provided to schools and you shortly.

### **What you will need to do:**

To register for a COVID-19 vaccination please follow the unique SMS link sent to you by Qudos Bank Arena NSW Health Vaccination Centre.

You will be required to provide the following information, which will be used to confirm your eligibility:

- First and last name
- Date of birth
- Residential Address
- Medicare details

Students must bring the following confirmation on the day of your appointment:

- Photo ID **and** Medicare Card
- Evidence of booking sent by either SMS or email

*Please be advised this invitation is for eligible students only and cannot be forwarded onto others. Eligibility will be confirmed on the day of your appointment.*

If you or a household contact are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, you must not attend the vaccination appointment. It is important you get tested and self-isolate until you receive a negative test result.

### **More information:**

For more information about the COVID-19 Vaccination Program in NSW please go to [nsw.gov.au/covid-19](https://nsw.gov.au/covid-19) or please call our free COVID-19 Vaccination Program hotline on 1800 571 155 between 8am – 9.30pm, 7 days a week.

## Frequently asked questions

### Are all students eligible to be vaccinated?

No, only students aged 16 years and above that are sitting the Higher School Certificate (HSC) this year (or otherwise completing year 12 in 2021), and attend school TAFE or live in one of the Local Government Areas (LGA) of concern are eligible to receive a COVID-19 vaccination at this time.

The nominated LGAs are Liverpool, Fairfield, Canterbury/Bankstown, Cumberland, Parramatta, Blacktown, Georges River and Campbelltown.

### Why are these LGAs being given priority?

There are a high number of cases of COVID-19 in the 8 LGAs of concern.

### When will other HSC students from other LGAs be eligible to be vaccinated?

Further information on expansion of vaccination initiatives will be communicated by the NSW Government.

### How will I get to my vaccination appointment?

Transport will be available to and from Qudos Bank Arena for most schools within the 8 LGAs. NSW Health are organising buses with Transport for NSW to make sure all students arrive at their allocated group time and progress for vaccination as quickly and seamlessly as possible. Schools with less than 10 HSC or Year 12 students will not have scheduled buses and students will be required to make their own way to and from Qudos Bank Arena. There are COVID-safe plans in place for this transportation to ensure your safety and wellbeing.

Those who live in the 8 LGAs, but go to school outside these LGAs will need to make their own way to the Qudos Bank Arena Vaccination Centre.

### Why is it important I arrive on time for my appointment?

All appointments have been organized to ensure minimal contact with other schools and other students. The vaccination appointments are booked as a group and attending as a school group will assist to identify you so you can progress for your vaccination as quickly and seamlessly as possible.

### My parent or carer wants to attend the appointment with me, is this okay?

To ensure the safety and wellbeing of all students and staff, numbers are strictly limited within the vaccination site. Parents and carers will not be able to enter the Vaccination Centre with you unless you require special assistance. NSW Health has organised health staff and supervisors to be health staff allocated to students during the vaccination process. If you do require special assistance or have any concerns, please discuss this with your school Principal who will coordinate a suitable plan for you.

### Can I use this link to book a vaccination for my family member?

No, these vaccination appointments are being prioritised for HSC students and students completing Year 12 in 2021 only. This link is non transferrable and cannot be shared with friends or family members. Eligibility will be confirmed on the day of your appointment, and those who are not eligible will not be able to receive the vaccine.

### **Is it safe for me to get the vaccine?**

Yes, vaccination is one of the best ways to protect you against COVID-19 and reduce the transmission of the virus. The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) recommends the COVID-19 Pfizer vaccine (Comirnaty) as the preferred vaccine for those aged 12 to under 60 years. You can find more information [here](#)

### **Can I leave my area for this vaccination?**

Yes, people who live in the Blacktown, Campbelltown Canterbury-Bankstown, Cumberland, Fairfield, Georges River, Liverpool or Parramatta LGAs are allowed to leave their home for a reasonable excuse, including to go out for medical or caring reasons, including obtaining a COVID-19 vaccination.

The NSW Government has published a [list of COVID-19 rules for affected LGAs](#).

### **Who do I call if I can't book/have issues with booking?**

If you require further assistance making your vaccination appointment, please contact 1800 57 11 55.

### **What vaccine is being offered?**

You will receive the COVID-19 Pfizer vaccine (Comirnaty) as it is the preferred vaccine for those aged 12 – 18 years. You will need two doses of the vaccine, 5 - 6 weeks apart. Information about your second vaccination will be provided by NSW Health.

# COVID-19 vaccination - Pfizer

## Information for students and parents

### Frequently asked questions

#### What type of vaccine is the Comirnaty (Pfizer) COVID-19 vaccine?

The Comirnaty (Pfizer) vaccine is an mRNA vaccine. The Pfizer vaccine is registered for use in people aged **12 years and older** and is currently the preferred COVID-19 vaccine brand for use in people under 60 years of age.

#### Why should I get a COVID-19 vaccine?

COVID-19 is a disease caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2. It can cause severe lung and generalised disease. It has caused [over 4 million deaths](#) worldwide, with more than 192 million cases reported.

Although the elderly and people with underlying medical conditions are at the highest risk, even healthy young people, can get severe COVID-19. In some people, COVID-19 may cause long-term symptoms of fatigue and breathlessness. We are still learning about other long-term complications caused by COVID-19.

The virus that causes COVID-19 is easily spread by people with few or no symptoms. If you are infected you may not become unwell with COVID-19, but you may pass the virus on to your family and friends without knowing it and they may become very ill.

By getting vaccinated, you are protecting yourself and others from severe COVID-19. Once a large proportion of the population is vaccinated, this will decrease the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

#### What is Comirnaty (Pfizer) vaccine and how does it work?

Vaccine name: Comirnaty (Pfizer, generic name BNT162b2)

Comirnaty (Pfizer) vaccine is a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine. This means the vaccine contains the genetic code for an important part of the COVID-19 virus 'spike protein'. After getting the vaccine, your body reads the genetic code and makes copies of the spike protein. The immune system then detects these spike proteins and learns how to recognise and fight COVID-19 if you are exposed to the virus later. The genetic code is quickly broken down and cleared away by the body.

#### How effective is Comirnaty (Pfizer) vaccine? How long will the protection from the vaccine last?

In clinical trials COVID-19 vaccines have been shown to provide excellent protection from getting sick with COVID-19. In these trials, after two doses the Comirnaty (Pfizer) vaccine was about 95% effective. In an Israeli study, the Pfizer vaccine was 87% effective against COVID-19 requiring hospitalisations from 7 days after two doses.

The Comirnaty (Pfizer) vaccine was found to be around 91% effective against symptomatic COVID-19 up to 6 months after the second dose. More information on the duration of protection of COVID-19 vaccines will be available over the coming months.

#### Is the Comirnaty (Pfizer) vaccine effective against new variants of the virus?

Some recent variants of SARS-CoV-2 are more easily spread and have been associated with increased numbers of cases in some countries.

Current evidence from clinical trials indicates that the antibodies that your body produces after COVID-19 vaccination are likely to provide protection to a variety of mutations and minor changes in the virus.

A recent [study from the UK](#) found the Comirnaty (Pfizer) vaccine is 96% effective against hospitalisation for the Delta variant after the second dose of vaccine.

## Can children and adolescents have the COVID-19 vaccine?

The Pfizer vaccine is registered for use in people aged **12 years and older** and is currently the preferred COVID-19 vaccine brand for use in people under 60 years of age.

On 23 July 2021, the Therapeutics Goods Administration (TGA) provisionally approved the use of the Pfizer vaccine in people aged 12 years and older. Previously, the Pfizer vaccine was provisionally approved for use in people aged 16 years and older.

In the US, as of 25 July 2021, 27.7% of the children aged 12–15 years were fully vaccinated and 37% had received at least one dose .

On 31 March 2021, Pfizer announced the [results of a study](#) in adolescents aged 12–15 years vaccinated with the Pfizer vaccine. The study showed that the Pfizer vaccine was extremely good at developing high levels of protective antibody and was considered safe in this age group.

## What side-effects might occur after vaccination with the Comirnaty (Pfizer) vaccine?

**Common** side effects after **Comirnaty** include:

- pain or swelling at the injection site
- tiredness
- headache
- muscle pain
- fever and chills
- joint pain.

**Less common** side effects after **Comirnaty** include:

- redness at the injection site
- nausea
- enlarged lymph nodes
- feeling unwell
- pain in limb
- insomnia
- itching at the injection site.

**Rare** side effects that have been reported after **Comirnaty** are:

- severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis).
- inflammation of the heart muscle, called myocarditis and pericarditis

A patient factsheet can be downloaded and is available:

<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/covid-19-vaccination-after-your-pfizer-comirnaty-vaccine>

## What is myocarditis and pericarditis? Does the Comirnaty (Pfizer) vaccine cause these conditions?

Myocarditis is inflammation of the heart muscle. Pericarditis is inflammation of the outer lining of the heart. Myopericarditis is where these two conditions occur together. There are many conditions that can cause myocarditis and pericarditis, and these include autoimmune conditions, viruses and bacteria, certain cancers and certain medications. People who get sick with COVID-19 can develop myocarditis and pericarditis.

Myocarditis and pericarditis have been seen in people who have had mRNA COVID-19 vaccines (including the Pfizer vaccine) overseas. Cases have been reported more commonly in **males aged <30 years**, mostly after the second dose of vaccine and typically within the first few days of COVID-19 vaccination. The exact rate is not yet known but it is rare. Most cases have been mild and respond to simple measures such as pain relief. The WHO's [Global Advisory Committee on Vaccine Safety](#) continue to recommend that the benefits of mRNA COVID-19 vaccine strongly outweigh the risk of myocarditis or pericarditis.

Cases of myocarditis and pericarditis after vaccination have also been reported in Australia. The TGA is monitoring these cases. Both these conditions occur relatively commonly in the general population, and not all cases that are reported after vaccination will be caused by the vaccine (that is, some may occur coincidentally).

ATAGI and the Cardiac Society of Australia and New Zealand (CSANZ) have jointly provided guidance on myocarditis and pericarditis after mRNA vaccines. The guidance has been published on the Department of Health website.

## **What are the symptoms of myocarditis or pericarditis and when should I seek help?**

Symptoms of pericarditis and myocarditis typically occur within 1 to 5 days (and up to 10 days) of vaccination and include:

- Chest pain (often sharp in nature but can also be stabbing or aching)
- Feelings of having a fast-beating, fluttering, or pounding heart
- Fainting
- Shortness of breath

If your child develops any of these symptoms, please seek medical attention and let your health care provider know about your recent vaccination history.

## **Reporting side effects**

You can report suspected side effects to your vaccination provider or other healthcare professional. They will then make a formal report on your behalf.

If you would prefer to report it yourself, please visit the [reporting suspected side effects associated with a COVID-19 vaccine webpage](#) on the TGA website and follow the directions on the page.

## **For more information**

- <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/covid-19-vaccination-atagi-clinical-guidance-on-covid-19-vaccine-in-australia-in-2021>
- <https://www.ncirs.org.au/health-professionals/ncirs-fact-sheets-faqs>
- <https://www.ncirs.org.au/public/covid-19-vaccines>
- <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/covid-19-vaccination-information-on-covid-19-pfizer-comirnaty-vaccine>
- <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines/getting-vaccinated-for-covid-19/what-happens-after-i-am-vaccinated-for-covid-19>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/safety/myocarditis.html>