

Best Practice COVID-19 Workplace Safety: Vaccination

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This factsheet provides best practice guidance on COVID-19 vaccination in workplaces.

Please use this information alongside other Tasmanian best practice guidance, including *Best Practice COVID-19 Safety: for Employers*, which includes a summary of risk assessment considerations.

Why is vaccination important?

COVID-19 vaccination is an important way to protect individuals and workforces against severe complications COVID-19. The latest evidence shows that, against the Omicron variant, vaccines provide:

- strong protection against severe illness (needing hospital admission) and death
- some protection against being infected

Having high levels of COVID-19 vaccination across the community and in workplaces helps:

- protect individuals against severe illness
- keep illness and hospitalisation rates at a level our health system can cope with.

Why are boosters important?

Boosters are important because COVID-19 vaccine effectiveness reduces over time.

- COVID-19 vaccines are highly effective at protecting against severe disease and death for one to two months after vaccination. That protection is reasonably maintained for up to six months. Each dose adds additional protection against severe illness and death.
- COVID-19 vaccines provide moderate protection against being infected. That protection peaks at two to six weeks after vaccination, then reduces over time.
- The limits to COVID-19 vaccines protection against infection also reflect limits to their protection against transmission (spread) of the virus.

Should I require COVID-19 vaccination in the workplace?

Employers can only require their workers to be vaccinated if:

- a specific law (for example, a public health order or guideline) requires it;

- the requirement is permitted by an enterprise agreement, other registered agreement or employment contract; or
- they give their workers a lawful and reasonable direction to be vaccinated.

For most workplaces, mandatory vaccination is not required for best practice COVID-19 workplace safety.

In the absence of a public health direction requiring workplace vaccination, employers should only make COVID-19 vaccination a condition of employment if it can be justified on work health and safety grounds, based on their risk assessment.

Vaccination *may* be justified as a condition of employment if it is shown to be a necessary control measure to address the risk of COVID-19 in that specific workplace. However, if most people are already vaccinated, there may be little value in requiring vaccination.

Employers have a duty to consult workers about workplace risks and how these risks are to be managed. This includes any policies about vaccination.

Before considering requiring your workers to be vaccinated:

- assess the risk, this includes the existing COVID-19 vaccination levels in the community
- consult workers about how COVID-19 risks can be best managed in the workplace
- determine the risk control measures your workplace will use
- implement and assess the effectiveness of control measures
- consider other ways to lift vaccination coverage, including:
 - providing information about vaccination and reminding workers of the need for boosters
 - facilitating access to vaccination, for example permitting workers to get vaccinated in work time, providing transport to clinics or arranging for a workplace-based vaccination program
 - facilitating access to health advice for workers who raise concerns about COVID-19 vaccination.

The management of COVID-19 continues to evolve, and with changes to community risk, advice may be revised. Updates are available at www.coronavirus.tas.gov.au. If any information in this factsheet is inconsistent with information on that website, please use the information online.