

Covid 19 is a serious disease, it has distressing and life threatening symptoms and can lead to major long term suffering and consequences

At the Yarra Valley Clinic we are immunizing our patients. Supplies of the vaccine are limited and we ask you to be patient. We will only book patients once we have the vaccine on site.

We will begin with the most vulnerable people of our community, those over 90, over 80 and over 70. Also younger people with significant risk factors for developing serious covid disease. We will also immunize emergency and healthcare workers.

The only people who are advised not to have the vaccine are those with a previous allergic reaction to the AstraZeneca vaccine and pregnant woman ( though there is no evidence to suggest that it is harmful to mothers or their unborn children).

***Note recent media coverage has highlighted a link between this vaccine and a rare but serious side effect involving clots around the base of the brain. This is very rare at around 1 in 200,000 and a death rate of 1 in 1,000,000. By comparison the risk of death from a colonoscopy is 1 in 10,000 and the annual risk of death from travelling by motor car in Victoria 1 in 23,000.***

***The federal government has stated that Pfizer vaccine is preferred in the under 50 age group, but it is not available and will not be for many months. Some patients under 50 may elect to have the AstraZeneca vaccine now and become protected from a pandemic of increasing threat rather than waiting months or a year for an alternative.***

General practice in Australia has access to the AstraZeneca ( Oxford) vaccine. This vaccine is given in two doses ideally 3 months apart. The second dose can be given as early as 4 weeks but the optimal response appears to be after 3 months. There is no evidence that a longer period leads to any lessening of response.

This vaccine is very effective and evidence suggests that a single dose gives great protection against ever getting any severe disease or requiring hospital treatment. For some people it will save their lives.

It is being given to millions of people across the world with real time reporting of any possible adverse effects thus making it one of the most studied health products in history.

Minor and transient side effects are however very common. This is part of the immune reaction to the vaccine , evidence of its effect in creating a long term immunity to the new novel virus.

Very common side effects in the 1-2 days following vaccination include:

- pain, tenderness or local swelling in the arm where you had your injection ( 60 %)
- feeling tired (60 %)
- feeling generally unwell 60 %
- headache 40 %
- general muscle aches 50 %
- fever `40%
- chills30 %
- joint pain 20 %
- nausea.

These symptoms normally go away in a few days. You can take a normal dose of paracetamol or ibuprofen and rest to help you feel better if you develop symptoms after vaccination.

***The rare but serious side effect of cerebral venous sinus thrombosis may present with a severe and ongoing headache between 4 and 20 days after immunization. Tiny haemorrhages ( little red spots smaller than a pin head) may be seen in the skin around the eyes and if you experience either of these you should present for urgent care. Any change in conscious state or confusion should also alert you for emergency care. In Australia there has been one case after 500,000 injections.***

The Australian governments are encouraging all side effects ( including minor) to be reported and this can be done via: ringing 1300 882 924 or on line via <https://www.safevac.org.au/Home/Info/VIC>

You will be asked for verbal consent at the time of immunization. Your immunization and batch number will be recorded in your health record and forwarded to the Australian Immunization register.

Following your injection ( to the upper arm) you will need to remain at the surgery in the presence of other patients for 15 mins or 30 mins if you have suffered a serious allergy in the past requiring the use adrenaline. You will also be recalled for your second dose in 3 months.

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