

Mandatory third dose COVID-19 vaccine for healthcare workers

COVID-19
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Manager Information Guide

Background

On 11:59pm Wednesday 12 January, the Minister for Health issued a Pandemic Order requiring that all healthcare operators must take all reasonable steps to ensure that its workers receive the COVID vaccination booster (or third dose).

This Order was made as the rate of COVID-19 hospitalisations and cases had dramatically increased in Victoria, to further protect staff in health care settings from the risk of outbreaks and super-spreader events.

This means that healthcare workers who:

- were eligible to receive the COVID Vaccination booster **on** 12 January 2022 must have received their third dose by **12 February 2022**, and
- become eligible to receive the COVID Vaccination booster **after** 12 January 2022 must have received their third dose by **29 March 2022**.

The mandatory vaccination requirement will not apply to workers who have a valid medical exemption.

Western Health is required to comply with the Pandemic Order and ensure that its employees have received the third dose of the COVID-19 vaccination. The definition of employees includes:

- Employees in clinical and non-clinical roles
- Casual employees
- Volunteers
- Students undertaking placement at Western Health
- Contractors and their employees

The requirement to receive the third dose of the COVID vaccine also applies to employees who are working from home. Where an employee is on long term leave, they cannot return to work until they have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19 (which from 29 March 2022 now includes three doses).

Pfizer and Moderna vaccines are available as a single booster dose, irrespective of the COVID-19 vaccine that was initially received. The AstraZeneca vaccine is also available for use as a booster dose for anyone who has had significant adverse reactions after a previous Pfizer or Moderna vaccination dose. Whilst other vaccines have been provisionally approved by the Therapeutics Goods Administration (e.g. Novavax) this is not current available for administration within Australia.

Please refer to the Mandatory COVID-19 vaccination for healthcare workers [FAQs](#) on the [COVID-19 Vaccination microsite](#).

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Western Health Obligations

Employees will be unable to continue to work at Western Health in the following circumstances:

- **12 February 2022** – where employees:
 - have not received their third dose of the COVID-19 vaccination (and were eligible to receive it **on** 12 January 2022); or
 - do not have a valid medical exemption.
- **29 March 2022** - where employees:
 - have not received their third dose of the COVID-19 vaccination (and became eligible to receive it **after** 12 January 2022); or
 - do not have a valid medical exemption.

Western Health is obliged to treat an employee as though they have not received the third dose until sufficient evidence is provided that the dose has been received.

Where Western Health records indicate that a staff member has not received the third dose of the COVID vaccine, over the past fortnight there have been emails sent to all employees once the staff member becomes eligible informing them that they can now receive the third dose.

If an employee has not provided evidence that they have received the third dose of a COVID-19, a process will commence. This process will involve a discussion with your staff member and each case will be investigated individually to understand the circumstances. Liaison and communication will occur with the affected employee to ensure that there is clarity on the process as this progresses.

Employees with a valid medical exemption will be able to continue working. This medical exemption needs to be accepted as being valid and meets the requirements of the Pandemic Order by Western Health's COVID Vaccination Medical Exemption Panel. If the exemption is granted, depending on the employee's role, they may need to be redeployed.

Evidence of third dose

We will have evidence of dose dates for all vaccinations administered at a Western Health vaccination centre. No action is required by employees who received their third dose at a Western Health operated site.

Staff who receive their third dose at a location other than a Western Health vaccination site must email COVIDVaccination@wh.org.au their:

- Immunisation History Statement from Medicare Online.
- Name (as it appears on their pay slip) and their employee number.

Please reiterate to your staff that they **should not** send their COVID vaccination certificate as evidence – this currently does not show details of third dose and therefore is not adequate evidence.



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Medical Exemption

An employee may receive a medical exemption they are unable to be vaccinated because they:

- have a medical contraindication to all COVID-19 vaccines available for use in Australia, or
- have an acute medical condition such as undergoing major surgery or hospital admission for a serious illness, including COVID-19 infection where vaccination can be deferred for up to 4 months after the infection (or earlier if the medical practitioner specifies an earlier date).

These medical exemptions are determined by ATAGI clinical guidance.

Whilst an employee may have an exemption of up to 4 months after having COVID disease, the latest clinical advice is that people can safely receive a dose of a COVID vaccine after all of their symptoms have subsided and they are well.

Employees can no longer use a medical certificate as evidence of COVID-19 vaccination exemption. The employee's doctor will need to update their record on the Australian Immunisation Register to show that they have a medical exemption.

Once the employee's exemption has been processed, they can download their COVID-19 digital certificate.

The duration of the medical exemption will be listed on the employee's COVID-19 digital certificate.

The employee needs to provide a copy of the COVID-19 digital certificate to you as their manager. Once this has been received, please send a copy of this to your People & Culture Business Partner.

Reporting

Western Health Managers have access to a [MAP2.0 report](#) that indicates the vaccination status of all of the employees within their cost centre(s).

Details of some frequently asked questions for the report is included in a [QRG for Managers](#).

In terms of the dates and details in this report:

- You can filter via deadline date and vaccination status
- Employees that have been nominated as having a due date of 12 February 2022 for their third dose were eligible to receive the third dose on 12 January when the Pandemic Order was made.
- Employees that have been nominated as having a due date of 29 March 2022 for their third dose were yet to be eligible to receive the third dose on 12 January when the Pandemic Order was enacted. Subsequent to this occurring, the interval between the second and third dose was decreased to 3 months. Despite this change, **it did not change the initial deadline for each staff member** – so even if the interval change would have retrospectively made them eligible on 12 January, their deadline remains 29 March 2022.
- The interval period in the report is the current interval – so the figure turns red once 3 months have lapsed since the employee's second dose.



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Manager Obligations

As a manager, you will be required to check on the COVID-19 vaccination status of your direct reports via [MAP2.0](#).

Before 12 February 2022

- Meet with employees who have not been vaccinated to encourage them to be vaccinated
- Advise them that:
 - they are required to have their third dose of a COVID vaccine by either 12 February or 29 March (as per MAP report) or have an eligible medical exemption.
 - the requirement to have the third dose of a COVID vaccine is a lawful and reasonable direction that they are expected to comply with.
 - if they are not vaccinated by the dates set out above, that Western Health will commence a process in accordance with their enterprise agreement. The process will investigate each case individually to understand the circumstances. Liaison and communication will occur with the affected employee to ensure that there is clarity on the process as this progresses.
- If an employee brings in evidence of a medical exemption (a COVID digital certificate), please send a copy to your People and Culture Business Partner. A medical certificate or letter is **no longer acceptable** evidence.
- If an employee has advised they will not be receiving the third dose, please your People and Culture Business Partner.

On Friday 11 February 2022 – for staff that are due on 12 February 2022

- Follow up all outstanding employees via [MAP2.0](#).
- Where an employee has advised they will not be receiving the third dose, please contact People and Culture
- Where an employee has applied for a medical exemption, collect evidence of the exemption (COVID digital certificate) and send it to your People and Culture Business Partner.
- People & Culture will lead the process with the manager for any staff member that was due to have their third dose prior to 12 February 2022 and we do not have evidence that this has occurred.

On Monday 28 March 2022 – for staff that are due on 29 March 2022

- Follow up all outstanding employees via [MAP2.0](#).
- Where an employee has advised they will not be receiving the third dose, please contact People and Culture
- Where an employee has applied for a medical exemption, collect evidence of the exemption (COVID digital certificate) and send it to your People and Culture Business Partner.
- People & Culture will lead the process with the manager for any staff member that was due to have their third dose prior to 29 March 2022 and we do not have evidence that this has occurred.

