



# ATAGI advice - AstraZeneca

17 June 2021

**OFFICIAL**

## Key messages – ATAGI advice 17 June 2021

- The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) are a group of experts who provide technical advice to the Commonwealth Minister for Health on the medical administration of vaccines in Australia, including COVID-19 vaccines.
- The Australian Technical Advisory Group (ATAGI) today released a [statement](#) advising that the Pfizer vaccine is preferred over the AstraZeneca vaccine for people aged 50-59 years.
- When taken together with previous recommendations from ATAGI, this means that the Pfizer vaccine is preferred for people aged 16-59 years.
- According to ATAGI, the recommendation was revised due to a higher risk and observed severity of thrombosis and thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS) related to the use of AstraZeneca vaccine observed in Australia in the 50–59-year-old age group than reported internationally and initially estimated in Australia.
- ATAGI state they considered several factors in deciding revise the previous recommendation, including:
  - The potential risk of severe illness and death from COVID-19 over the coming months
  - Minimising harms to people due to adverse events after vaccination
  - Australian data on the age-specific risks and severity of TTS after receiving AstraZeneca
  - The expected vaccine supply over the months ahead
  - The impacts of any change in recommendation on the COVID-19 vaccine program.
- The Victorian Department of Health is assessing the implications for the Victorian rollout of the Australian Government's COVID-19 vaccination program.
- Work is underway to ensure people aged 50-59 years who are currently booked to receive their first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine are able to receive Pfizer vaccine at a vaccination centre.
- The risk of TTS following a second dose of AstraZeneca is much lower than the risk following a first dose. If an individual is booked to receive their second dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine, and have had no major adverse reaction following their first dose, they should receive their second dose as planned and at the recommended interval of 12 weeks. This is safe and recommended by ATAGI.
- If you need advice to help you make an informed decision about your health and COVID-19 vaccination, please talk with your doctor.

## About thrombosis and thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS)

The AstraZeneca vaccine appears to be associated with a rare side effect called thrombosis and thrombocytopenia syndrome (TTS).

TTS involves blood clots (thrombosis) and low levels of blood platelets (thrombocytopenia). In Australia, symptoms of TTS have occurred between 4 and 28 days post-vaccination. The blood clots can occur in different parts of the body, such as the brain (called cerebral venous sinus thrombosis or CVST) or in the abdomen. The mechanism that causes TTS is not fully understood, but it appears to be a form of immune reaction to the platelets in the blood which causes clotting.