

## Healthscope COVID-19 Vaccination Policy – Workers\*

8 November 2021

### Top 10 Frequently Asked Questions

#### Q1: Why is Healthscope introducing this policy?

**A:** Healthscope is responsible for providing a safe workplace and in doing so reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. COVID-19 is a highly contagious and potentially fatal condition and Healthscope has developed this risk-based policy to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in the workplace.

While the COVID-19 vaccine is not a total solution to managing COVID-19 in the workplace, vaccination must form a key part of our strategy to keep our patients and workforce safe.

#### Q2: When do I have to be vaccinated under Healthscope’s COVID-19 vaccination policy?

**A:** Unless required to do so earlier by an applicable Public Health Order or other law or government directive, to work for Healthscope after 31 January 2022, all ‘Workers’\* (as defined below and in the policy) are required to show evidence of completed vaccination against COVID-19 (which currently requires two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration or otherwise approved by Healthscope), or alternatively to demonstrate evidence of a valid exemption.

In the meantime, we encourage everyone to be vaccinated as soon as possible.

#### Q3: Where can I get access to a COVID-19 vaccination?

**A:** Healthcare workers are a priority group for COVID-19 vaccination. Vaccination is getting easier as the supply of vaccines increases. Both the Federal and State Governments operate vaccination programs with State Government vaccination hubs, GP vaccination bookings, and vaccination via some pharmacies (depending on area).

If you have not yet received your COVID-19 vaccination, the booking details are shared at:

<https://healthscope.com.au/internal-pages/vaccinations>

#### Q4: How do I provide evidence of my COVID-19 vaccination status?

**A:** There are two forms of evidence of your vaccination status. The first is an online immunisation history statement and the other is a COVID-19 digital certificate from the Australian Immunisation Register. These can both be accessed through:

- Your Medicare online account
- The Express Plus Medicare app
- The Australian Immunisation Register
- My Health Record.

More information can be found on the Australian Government website:

[www.servicesaustralia.gov.au](http://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au)

\* **“Workers”** includes employees, individual contractors / sole traders, and volunteers of Healthscope.

**Q5: Are the COVID-19 vaccines safe?**

**A:** Healthscope is satisfied with the safety and efficacy data on the currently available vaccines. Vaccines in Australia have been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration to ensure that they are safe and effective. If you have questions or concerns about the COVID-19 vaccines your primary care doctor is best-placed to discuss this with you.

More information about the COVID-19 vaccines can be found on the Australian Government website: <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines>.

**Q6: What if I wish to request an exemption from having a COVID-19 vaccination?**

**A:** Healthscope recognises that there may be circumstances which prevent a Worker from being able to comply with the vaccination policy, for example in circumstances where a medical contraindication makes it unsafe for the Worker to have the COVID-19 vaccination. Healthscope will consider and discuss those circumstances with the relevant Worker and determine whether to grant an exemption. However, Healthscope is only able to offer exemptions where permitted by law.

Should a Worker wish to apply for an exemption, the Worker is required to:

- Provide a completed 'Request for Exemption Form', together with supporting documentation in writing to the Worker's manager.
- Exemptions must be submitted to the Worker's Manager by the date required for first vaccination by the Public Health Order in your State or Territory, and if no Public Health Order, no later than 30 November 2021.
- For medical contraindications, supporting documentation must follow the prescribed form pursuant to any applicable Public Health Order, and if no standard form applies, be issued from a medical practitioner and state the medical reason(s) why the Worker should be exempt.

Once the above has been received, Healthscope will assess each exemption request on a case-by-case basis. Healthscope may request additional information from the Worker as part of this assessment. Healthscope may not in all cases be able to grant a Worker's request.

Examples of exemption requests which are not likely to be accepted by Healthscope include:

- 'Conscientious objections' (i.e. theories or personal position against COVID-19 vaccination)
- Requests where the reason for the exemption does not meet the Public Health Order or legislative requirements for exemption, as applicable (for example, only limited medical contraindications are permitted pursuant to the NSW Public Health Order).

Please refer to the COVID-19 Vaccination Policy – Workers 15.01 for additional information.

**Q7: Will I get time off work to receive a COVID-19 vaccination?**

**A:** Healthcare Workers are critical during the pandemic, so we request that you organise your COVID-19 vaccination outside of work hours, if possible, to get you back on deck quickly at this crucial time.

In order to assist Workers in attending COVID-19 vaccination appointments, Healthscope will offer flexibility in rostering and work schedules wherever reasonably possible to accommodate such appointments. Workers may be asked to show evidence of an appointment confirmation upon the

request of their manager.

Speak with your line manager if you have questions and check the links provided to identify your closest vaccine hub: <https://healthscope.com.au/internal-pages/vaccinations>

**Q8: Will additional support be made available to employees in case of vaccine side-effects?**

**A:** If a Worker experiences side effects after receiving the COVID-19 vaccine and is not well enough to work, the Worker may be eligible to take their sick leave. Where a Worker does not have this entitlement then Healthscope may provide the Worker with unpaid leave at its discretion.

Where employees suffer any lost time injury as a result of vaccination there may be an entitlement to lodge a workers' compensation claim depending on the circumstances. Please contact the Injury Management Specialist for your site if you have a team member who has a query regarding workers compensation following a vaccination. Realistically, it will be unlikely where employees may have missed a day or two of work (since they may prefer to access personal leave) but it will be their choice if they want to make a workers' compensation claim.

If you are amongst the very small minority of people who have a moderate to significant impact following an adverse reaction to an approved COVID-19 vaccine, there is currently a federal Government scheme being implemented which will compensate these people. You can find the details at <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccine-claims-scheme>.

**Q9: What did consultation on the policy involve, and what was the feedback? How did the policy change as a result of the feedback?**

**A:** Healthscope conducted consultation on the draft COVID-19 vaccination policy through various channels: WHS Committees / Health and Safety Representative (HSR) at all sites nationally, general consultation sessions locally, all-staff consultation sessions offered centrally via zoom, open consultation via central communication email address and union consultation.

The overwhelming majority of feedback was supportive of the policy, in particular the risk-based approach and focus on safety. Suggestions around adding clarity to the exemption process have been taken on board and we have updated the policy as a result. Other comments in consultation were questions rather than input on the policy, and we have updated this FAQ document to provide answers to the most common questions.

**Q10: What about booster shots?**

**A:** At this stage, two doses of a TGA-approved COVID-19 vaccine are necessary to meet the vaccination requirement, both according to Healthscope's policy and applicable public health orders. Booster shots are just beginning to be available in Australia but are not yet required for compliance purposes.