

COVID-19 Vaccination for Transplant Recipients

This statement has been developed by the TSANZ, the peak representative body of transplantation professionals in Australia and New Zealand as a guide for transplant recipients following a statement from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) on the AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine in response to new vaccine safety concerns.

TSANZ support the following as recommended by the COVID-19 National Transplantation and Donation Rapid Response Taskforce:

- Vaccination is an important strategy to help reduce the risk of developing infectious diseases, including COVID-19, caused by infection with the SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus.
- The benefits of vaccination outweigh the risks for transplant recipients and immunocompromised patients.
- As borders are increasingly opened up and winter starts, we are all at risk of old and new strains of coronavirus - with resultant shutdowns, hospitalisation and unfortunately death.
- The media has daily reports of COVID vaccine supply issues and possible side effects. We are carefully monitoring the medical information and facts around vaccination to provide the best current advice.
- Accessing the COVID vaccine through a GP clinic in your area sooner rather than later is a good idea.
- The syndrome associated with the AstraZeneca vaccine involving thrombosis (clotting) with thrombocytopenia (low blood platelet count) is a very, very rare risk and COVID is still a very real and bigger threat.
- ATAGI has recommended that in general, the Pfizer vaccination is preferred over the AstraZeneca Vaccine for people under 50 years of age.
- Currently the Pfizer vaccine will not be readily available until later in the year.
- If you are a transplant candidate or recipient under the age of 50 there is a higher risk of more severe illness or death if you contract COVID compared to the general population.
- Therefore, there may be individual circumstances where the benefits of being vaccinated with the available COVID vaccine (including the AstraZeneca vaccine) significantly outweigh the very low risk of thrombosis with thrombocytopenia syndrome. This individual patient decision should be discussed with your transplant specialist
- In such cases, TSANZ would support the use of the AstraZeneca vaccine, this is in line with the ATAGI recommendations which state that the COVID-19 AstraZeneca vaccine “can be used in adults under 50 years where the benefits are likely to outweigh the risks for that individual”.
- Partners and household contacts aged under 50 years old- should follow the general public health message to avoid the AstraZeneca vaccine at this time.

If you have a specific question or concern regarding COVID vaccination, we suggest that you contact your own specialist or transplant unit for advice, because local conditions and advice vary across Australia. This advice will be updated as more information becomes available.