

**TO:** Local media

**DATE:** 20 October 2021

**SUBJECT:** Third COVID-19 vaccine doses for severely immunocompromised individuals

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## **Please attribute to an Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District spokesperson**

From today, Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District (ISLHD) vaccination clinics will be offering a third COVID-19 vaccine dose to people aged 12 and older who are severely immunocompromised.

This follows advice from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) recommending that a third dose of a COVID-19 vaccine (preferably an mRNA vaccine such as Pfizer or Moderna) will further increase their protection against the virus. AstraZeneca can also be given for the third dose if the person received it for their first two doses, or, if they have previously had an adverse reaction to an mRNA vaccine. The recommended interval for the third dose is two to six months after the second dose of vaccine.

It is important to note that a third dose is different to a booster dose. Third doses are part of the primary vaccination course for the severely immunocompromised, intended to increase their immune response to a level closer to the average fully vaccinated person.

Severely immunocompromised people (as defined by ATAGI) are those receiving active treatment for cancer (chemotherapy, radiotherapy, and/or hormonal therapy), malignant blood cancers, organ failure, advanced or untreated HIV, or those on immunosuppressive or biologic therapies. The full definition list can be found on the [Australian Government Department of Health website](#).

Patients who are mildly to moderately immunocompromised are not being recommended by ATAGI to have a third dose at this stage. Those who are unsure if they meet the ATAGI criteria for a third dose of vaccine should discuss their situation with their general practitioner or specialist.

Our booking system has now been updated to enable those eligible to schedule a third dose appointment at the Mass Vaccination Centre in Wollongong, the Shoalhaven Hospital Vaccination Clinic in Nowra, or the Shellharbour City Centre Vaccination Clinic.

Appointments are preferred and can be made by calling the ISLHD Booking Team on 1300 096 365 during business hours, or online via the [ISLHD COVID-19 Vaccination Support form](#). Due to the strict eligibility criteria, appointments will not be available via the COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic Finder at this time.

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### **Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District**

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In addition to the District's clinics, third doses for the severely immunocompromised continue to be available at local general practitioners and pharmacies.

People receiving a third vaccination dose will be required to sign a declaration form confirming their health status.

Australia's COVID-19 vaccination program is led by the Commonwealth Government, which is expected to receive advice from ATAGI within the coming weeks about booster doses for the general population.

We would like to assure the community there is plenty of vaccine to supply third doses while continuing to provide first and second doses to the broader community.