

26 August 2022 - Novavax Vaccine for Adolescents Aged 12-17 Years | Safe Disposal of COVID-19 Vaccines | Changes to Vaccine Products Being Administered

Dear Service Provider,

This email provides information from the COVID-19 Taskforce (Taskforce) about a range of matters relevant to participating pharmacies in the COVID-19 Vaccination in Community Pharmacy (CVCP) Program, as follows:

- Novavax Vaccine for Adolescents Aged 12-17 Years
- Safe Disposal of COVID-19 Vaccines
- Changes to Vaccine Products Being Administered.

Novavax Vaccine for Adolescents Aged 12-17 Years

- On 28 July 2022 the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) provisionally approved Nuvaxovid (Novavax) COVID-19 vaccine (Bioelect Pty Ltd/Novavax Inc) for use in adolescents aged 12-17 years.
- The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) has evaluated data on immunogenicity, efficacy, safety, and international [recommendations](#) to make recommendations on the use of Novavax COVID-19 vaccine in this age group:
 - ATAGI recommends COVID-19 vaccination in all adolescents aged 12-17 years.
 - Pfizer, Moderna or Novavax can be used for the primary course of COVID-19 vaccination in this age group.
 - Compared with the mRNA vaccines (Pfizer and Moderna), there is less information on safety and immunogenicity of the Novavax COVID-19 vaccine.
 - The recommended primary course dosing schedule for Novavax COVID-19 vaccine is 2 doses, 8 weeks apart.
 - People with severe immunocompromise are recommended to receive 3 doses of COVID-19 vaccine, for more details see the [Provider Guide to COVID-19 vaccination of people with immunocompromise](#).

The Australian Government has **accepted** advice from ATAGI that adolescents aged 12-17 years can receive the Novavax COVID-19 vaccine for their primary course of COVID-19 vaccination and will include it in the COVID-19 Vaccination Program from **5 September 2022**.

All primary care vaccination sites may commence administering Novavax to this population immediately if they have appointments and stock available.

Safe Disposal of COVID-19 Vaccines

- All vaccine vials (including expired, partially used, and empty vials) and waste (needles and syringes) must be disposed of in accordance with local requirements in a **clinical waste bin**.
- **Please note:** Return Unwanted Medicines (RUM) bins **are not** an approved clinical waste bin.



Reminder: The CVAS Site Readiness Checklist and Declaration includes the requirement for "A documented procedure in place for disposing of open and unused vaccine and its packaging components in accordance with local requirements for disposal of Schedule 4 medicines and with any return and disposal instructions provided by the Australian Government (which includes that boxes containing the vaccines must be defaced and disposed of by local clinical dosing facility waste management services)."

Dispose of clinical waste **immediately** (including sharps and vaccine vials):

- At the point of use.
- When vaccines expire or when vials are empty.

Storing expired vaccines along with in-date vaccines increases the risk of vaccine administration errors (VAEs).

The VOC has been notified of several VAEs where expired and used vials/syringes that were stored in the vaccine fridge pending disposal were mistakenly administered to patients.

Potential consequences include:

Patients not receiving effective or viable vaccine - placing them at increased risk:

- Requirement to contact patient to disclose error
- Potentially requiring replacement vaccine
- Loss of confidence in vaccine provider by patients



Changes to Vaccine Products Being Administered

- The Vaccine Operations Centre (VOC) is the primary point of contact for any requests to change the vaccine type/s you wish to administer in the Program.
- Please contact the VOC to notify any intention to withdraw or amend the vaccines you will be administering.
- People rely on the VCF to find and book COVID-19 vaccinations. It is crucial that it has accurate information.
- If you are changing the vaccine types you are administering, you must also log in to VCF Connect and update your service details. Keeping your details up to date is a mandatory requirement of the vaccine program.

Kind regards,

Pharmacy Programs Administrator