



## STATEMENT ON THE DURATION OF OBSERVATION AFTER VACCINATION IN THE CONTEXT OF MINIMISING RISK OF EXPOSURE TO COVID-19 AT HEALTH CARE FACILITIES

The Australian Immunisation Handbook currently recommends that individuals who receive a vaccination should remain under observation for at least 15 minutes for possible immediate adverse events and to receive rapid medical care if needed.<sup>1</sup> Immediate adverse events are rare and may include anaphylaxis (0.65–1.53 per million vaccine doses)<sup>2,3</sup> and vasovagal syncope (fainting).<sup>4,5</sup> Most syncopal episodes occur early (>50% within 5 minutes, and 80% by 15 minutes);<sup>4</sup> these can be rendered less likely by taking simple measures in syncope-prone individuals.<sup>6</sup>

In the current context of increasing risk of community-transmitted COVID-19 disease, the risk of exposure to potentially infected patients in medical practices/immunisation clinics may be increased. If this risk cannot be completely controlled in the clinic setting, the benefit of minimising the post-vaccination observation period to reduce COVID-19 exposure risk may outweigh the small risk of reduced detection of immediate rare post-vaccination adverse events at the clinic.

Therefore, in the context of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, ATAGI advises that:

- a) where an immunisation clinic (including waiting area, treatment rooms, etc) is separate or allows adequate social distancing from others (staff or other patients), the standard 15-minute observation period should be observed, and this remains the optimal protocol.
- b) where adequate social distancing at the clinic is not possible, a post-vaccination observation period of at least **5 minutes** (typically the time taken to apply pressure to and cover the injection site, for the vaccinee to re-dress and for vaccination record documentation) may be sufficient, **if the vaccinee meets the following criteria:**
  - 1) no history of severe allergic reactions or immediate post-vaccination reactions, such as syncope
  - 2) assessment at around 5 minutes after vaccination shows no evidence of any immediate adverse reactions
  - 3) a parent/carer (for children) or another responsible adult is capable of supervising for the first 15 minutes post vaccination
  - 4) it is possible for the vaccinee to sit or lay down safely if they feel unwell
  - 5) the vaccinee does not drive or operate machinery for the first 15 minutes after vaccination
  - 6) the vaccinee (or the parent/carer/responsible adult) is aware of when and how to seek post-vaccination advice, and have ready access to assistance and emergency services, if required.

*It is important to read this statement in conjunction with The Australian Immunisation Handbook available at [immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au](https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au).*

### References

1. Australian Government Department of Health. [Australian Immunisation Handbook. Vaccination Procedures - After Vaccination](#). 2020. (Accessed 31/03/2020).
2. Bohlke K, Davis RL, Marcy SM, et al. Risk of anaphylaxis after vaccination of children and adolescents. *Pediatrics* 2003;112:815-20.
3. McNeil MM, Weintraub ES, Duffy J, et al. Risk of anaphylaxis after vaccination in children and adults. *Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology* 2015.
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Syncope after vaccination--United States, January 2005-July 2007. *MMWR; Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report* 2008;57:457-60.
5. Crawford NW, Clothier HJ, Elia S, et al. Syncope and seizures following human papillomavirus vaccination: a retrospective case series. *Medical Journal of Australia* 2011;194:16-8.
6. [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Fainting \(Syncope\)](#). 2015. (Accessed 31/03/2020).