



AFTER-CARE GUIDE

After your vaccination

Most people feel completely normal within a day or two of a vaccination. This sheet explains what is common, what is not, and when to seek advice. Keep it somewhere visible for the first 48 hours after your appointment.

Before you leave the pharmacy

You will be observed for at least 15 minutes after every vaccination. This observation period exists to manage rare allergic reactions promptly — please do not leave early, even if you feel completely fine. Use the observation time to settle, drink water, and ask the immuniser any final questions.

Avoid driving for at least 30 minutes after your appointment. Light-headedness from a vaccination itself is uncommon, but anxiety-related fainting can happen, and it is safer to wait.

Common reactions in the first 24–48 hours

These reactions are normal, expected, and a sign your immune system is responding to the vaccine. They typically peak in the first 24 hours and resolve within 48–72 hours.

- Soreness, redness, warmth or mild swelling at the injection site.
- Mild fever (up to about 38.5 °C) — most common after the shingles, COVID-19 and pneumococcal vaccines.
- Tiredness or low energy lasting a day or two.
- Headache, mild muscle aches, or chills.
- A small painless lump that lasts a few days at the injection site.

Caring for these symptoms at home

Apply a cool, damp cloth to the injection site for 10–15 minutes if it is sore or swollen. Drink plenty of fluids. Rest if you feel tired. Paracetamol is appropriate for fever or pain — follow the dose on the packet. Avoid aspirin for children under 16.

Less common reactions

These are uncommon but recognised reactions. They generally resolve on their own. If they last more than a few days or are severe, speak to your immuniser, GP or call healthdirect (1800 022 222).



- Mild rash 5–12 days after a measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccination — non-infectious.
- Joint aches, particularly in adult women, after MMR or rubella-containing vaccines.
- A larger lump (golf-ball sized) at the injection site that resolves within 1–2 weeks.
- A short period of feeling generally unwell after the shingles or pneumococcal vaccines.

When to seek medical advice

Call 000 immediately if any of these occur

Difficulty breathing or wheezing. Swelling of the lips, tongue, or throat. Hives or generalised rash spreading rapidly. Sudden severe weakness, dizziness or collapse. These can be signs of anaphylaxis — a rare but serious allergic reaction that responds quickly to adrenaline.

CALL US, YOUR GP OR HEALTHDIRECT (1800 022 222) IF YOU HAVE:

- Fever above 38.5 °C lasting more than 48 hours.
- Severe pain, redness, or swelling at the injection site getting worse after 48 hours.
- Persistent vomiting or watery diarrhoea.
- Pus, hot redness spreading from the injection site, or a fever that returns after settling.
- Any new symptom that worries you, or one that was mild but is getting worse.

Reporting an adverse event

Australia monitors vaccine safety actively through SAFEVAC (the Surveillance of Adverse Events Following Vaccination In the Community), which is operated by the Murdoch Children's Research Institute on behalf of the Victorian Department of Health.

If you experience any unusual symptoms after a vaccination, you are encouraged to report them to SAFEVAC. Reports are used to monitor safety, refine recommendations, and improve future vaccinations for everyone. Reporting takes about 5 minutes online.

- Online: safevac.org.au
- Phone: 1300 882 924 (option 1)
- Or speak to us — we can submit the report on your behalf.

Updating your record

Every vaccination given in Australia is reported to the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) within 24 hours. You can download an Immunisation History Statement at any time from your myGov account —



accepted by schools, employers, universities and Family Tax Benefit assessments.

For step-by-step instructions including screenshots, see
immunisationhub.com.au/check-immunisation-record

References

Australian Immunisation Handbook (current online edition). Department of Health and Aged Care.
immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au

ATAGI clinical advice statements. atagi.health.gov.au

AusVaxSafety active surveillance program. ausvaxsafety.org.au

SAFEVAC adverse event reporting. safevac.org.au

healthdirect Australia: 1800 022 222 — 24-hour nurse-led health advice line.