



12 February 2024

Dear aged care resident,

I am writing to you from the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission. We are concerned that there is a **big rise in the number of aged care residents who are NOT getting the COVID-19 vaccine booster shot** when it is due.

There is still a lot of COVID-19 in the community. Outbreaks of the virus are currently increasing in aged care homes across Australia.

Old age is the biggest risk to becoming seriously ill with COVID-19. People living in residential aged care are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 infections. Being up to date with your COVID-19 vaccinations gives you significant protection and reduces the risk of you developing a serious COVID-19 infection. Up-to-date vaccination includes having had a **booster shot in the last 6 months.**

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) are the leading experts on COVID-19 vaccinations in Australia. They advise that the main aim of COVID-19 vaccination is to reduce the risk of serious illness and death.

In February 2023, **ATAGI updated their recommendations. They recommend that all adults 75 years and older should have an extra 2023 COVID-19 vaccine dose if it has been 6 months since their last dose.** This advice is still correct for February 2024. The immunity you get from vaccination reduces over time. Boosters increase and maintain your immunity to COVID-19.

It is your decision to have the COVID-19 vaccinations and keep your boosters up to date. I strongly encourage you to think carefully about this. Getting vaccinated protects your own wellbeing and your fellow residents. Your aged care provider must help you to access vaccinations. Feel free to raise getting vaccinated with them and ask for their help.

Yours sincerely,

Janet Anderson, PSM
Commissioner

Dr Melanie Wroth, MB BS, FRACP
Chief Clinical Advisor