

MEDIA RELEASE**For immediate release****May 12, 2021**

People with kidney disease and kidney transplants urged to get the COVID-19 vaccine

Kidney Health Australia, along with the Australian and New Zealand Society of Nephrology (ANZSN) and the Transplant Society of Australia and New Zealand (TSANZ) are urging all individuals with kidney disease to get vaccinated as soon as they can.

Kidney Health Australia, the ANZSN and TSANZ represent people with kidney disease, those on dialysis or living with a kidney transplant and health professionals who oversee their health needs.

As the peak body for kidney health, Kidney Health Australia is supporting the call to protect this group who are at increased risk of severe COVID-19 disease.

“People with kidney disease often have weaker immune systems and may struggle to fight against infections. So, if you have kidney disease you may be more at risk of infection and of developing more severe disease. Patients who are on special medications to dampen their immune system are also at increased risk of infections” said Prof Karen Dwyer, Clinical Director of Kidney Health Australia.

“Vaccination is an important strategy to help reduce the chance of getting infected with Sars-CoV-2. You still might get COVID-19 after the vaccination, but you will be less likely to get severe disease and go to hospital,” said Prof Dwyer.

The ANZSN emphasises that people with kidney disease including those on dialysis or have received a transplant are a priority group. They recommend that all people with kidney disease get vaccinated.

“Patients receiving dialysis or those with a transplant are most at risk, with a mortality rate up to three times higher than those without kidney disease. A recent publication described ‘*chronic kidney disease (as) the condition conveying the highest risk for severe COVID-19*’ thus reported low vaccination numbers in this population is a huge concern” said Prof Neil Boudville President of ANZSN.

The Transplantation Society of Australia and New Zealand has developed and released a [COVID-19 Vaccination for Transplant Recipients statement](#). This is in direct response to vaccine safety concerns and should be used as a guide for transplant recipients.

Prof Helen Pilmore President of TSANZ said “There is now a lot of information showing that having kidney disease or a kidney transplant means you can get sicker with COVID-19”.

“Although the vaccines have not yet been tested extensively in dialysis or transplant patients, all vaccine types are suitable to use in people with kidney disease and kidney transplants. All vaccine types have an important effect on reducing your risk of serious infection” Prof Helen Pilmore said.

Now in Phase 2b of the Australian Government vaccine rollout, people aged over 50, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples aged 16-49 years, younger adults with health

conditions (such as those with kidney disease, kidney transplants and receiving dialysis) as well as high risk workers are currently being vaccinated.

Kidney Health Australia, the ANZSN and TSANZ encourage all kidney patients to keep themselves up to date with emerging information on COVID-19 and the vaccine development and rollout. Here are some websites with trusted and reliable information.

- Australian Government <https://www.health.gov.au/initiatives-and-programs/covid-19-vaccines>
- Kidney Health Australia <https://kidney.org.au/covid-19-and-your-kidneys>
- Transplant Australia <https://transplant.org.au/>

-ENDS-

Reviewed and endorsed by the Australian and New Zealand Society of Nephrology and the Transplant Society of Australia and New Zealand.

Interviews

Prof Karen Dwyer, Nephrologist and Clinical Director, Kidney Health Australia
Prof Neil Boudville, President, Australian and New Zealand Society of Nephrology
Prof Helen Pilmore, President, Transplant Society of Australia and New Zealand

About Kidney Health Australia

Kidney Health Australia is a not-for-profit and the peak body for kidney health in Australia with the aim to protect 5 million at risk Australians from developing end stage kidney disease, and to save and improve the lives of people already affected by the disease through support services and funding crucial research. To find out more visit www.kidney.org.au

Kidney Health Facts

- Kidneys are essential to a person's health and wellbeing. They rid your body of waste (through urine), clean your blood of waste and toxins, regulate your blood pressure and manage the production of Vitamin D – essential to strong bones, muscles and overall health!
- Kidney-related disease kills more people than breast cancer, prostate cancer and road accidents
- Figures released by the Bureau of Statistics late last year revealed that about 63 people are dying with kidney-related disease every day
- Kidney disease sufferers can lose 90% of kidney function without experiencing any symptoms
- One in three people living in Australia is at risk of developing chronic kidney disease
- Of the staggering 1.7 million people affected by kidney disease, 1.5 million are not aware they have it
- One in five Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders have indicators of chronic kidney disease and are four times more likely to die from it than the non-Indigenous population

- Chronic Kidney Disease costs the economy more than \$5 billion per year:
 - The total costs of early stages (pre-kidney failure) are estimated at \$4.1 billion per year
 - Kidney Failure treatments – dialysis and transplantation are estimated to cost over \$1 billion per year

For media enquiries, please contact:

Alexandra Kury, Brand and Communications Specialist

Kidney Health Australia

Phone: 0434 801 485 or email: media@kidney.org.au

<https://kidney.org.au>