
Immunisations for work

Summary

- Immunisations help to keep us healthy at work. They also keep the people you are working with, and the wider community, healthy too.
 - Some jobs have a higher risk of exposure to infectious diseases. If your job is one of these, it's a good idea to check your immunisation status.
 - When you are immune to vaccine-preventable diseases, not only are you safe from infection but so are the people around you.
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Immunisations help to keep us healthy at work. They also keep the people you are working with, and the wider community, healthy too.

Some jobs have a higher risk of exposure to **infectious diseases**, so read on to see if this is your job. And if it is, it's a good idea to check your immunisation status. When you are immune to vaccine-preventable diseases, not only are you safe from infection but so are the people around you.

What jobs are higher risk?

Many jobs have a higher risk of exposure to **infectious diseases**, and for some, there is even a higher risk of spreading these diseases to people who are mostly either too sick or too young to be immunised. These jobs include:

- **carers**
- healthcare workers
- people working with children
- people working with animals
- emergency workers
- people exposed to human tissue, blood, body fluids or sewerage.

What immunisations do I need?

Let's look at some of the different immunisations that are needed for some high risk jobs. These immunisations are in addition to the routine immunisations you should have received when you were younger. Sometimes a booster **vaccine** is needed, such as for **whooping cough** or **tetanus** protection.

Remember to keep your immunisations up to date, not all the vaccines recommended for people in higher risk occupations provide lifelong immunity. For example, **the influenza vaccine is seasonal**, so annual immunisation is recommended every year. If you're unsure, speak with your GP (doctor).

Carers

If you care or work for someone with developmental disabilities, you should be vaccinated for:

- **hepatitis A**
- **hepatitis B**
- **influenza (flu)**.

If you work in a nursing home or a long-term care facility, you should be vaccinated for:

- **influenza (flu)**
 - **measles, mumps, rubella (MMR)**
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- **chickenpox (varicella)**.

Healthcare workers

If you are a healthcare worker, you should be vaccinated for:

- **hepatitis B**
- **influenza (flu)**
- **measles, mumps, rubella (MMR)**
- **whooping cough (pertussis)**
- **chickenpox**.

If you are a healthcare worker in a remote Aboriginal community, or if you are a healthcare worker working with Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia or Western Australia, you should also be vaccinated for:

- **hepatitis A**.

People working with children

If you **work with children** (for example, in a preschool or childcare centre, or as a school teacher, before and after school care worker, or youth services worker), you should be vaccinated for:

- **influenza**
- **measles, mumps, rubella (MMR)**
- **whooping cough**
- **chickenpox**
- **hepatitis B**.

People working with animals

If you are a veterinarian, veterinary student or veterinary nurse, you should be vaccinated for:

- **influenza**
- **Q fever**
- **rabies/lyssavirus**.

If you work as one of the following, you should be vaccinated for Q fever:

- an agricultural college staff member or student aged over 15 who could be exposed to high-risk animals
- an abattoir worker (excluding pig abattoirs), livestock transporter, sheep shearer, farmer (cattle, sheep, goat and dairy), worker involved in culling or processing kangaroos or camels, tanning and hide worker, livestock saleyard worker or worker handling animal products of conception
- a wildlife or zoo worker who has contact with at-risk animals, including kangaroos and bandicoots.

If you handle bats as part of your job (for example, bat handler, bat scientist, wildlife officer or zoo curator), you should be vaccinated for:

- **rabies/lyssavirus**.

If you handle poultry or are a swine industry worker as part of your job (for example, poultry worker or worker involved in culling during an outbreak of **avian influenza**, or you are a swine (pig) industry worker, you should be vaccinated for:

- **influenza**.

Emergency workers

If you are a police or emergency worker, you should be vaccinated for:

- **hepatitis B**
- **influenza (flu)**

- **tetanus**.

Armed forces personnel

If you are armed forces personnel, you should be vaccinated for:

- **hepatitis B**
- **influenza**
- **meningococcal disease**
- **measles, mumps, rubella (MMR)**
- **tetanus**
- other vaccines relevant to deployment.

Detention or immigration centre worker

If you work at a detention or immigration centre, you should be vaccinated for:

- **hepatitis B**
- **influenza**
- **measles, mumps, rubella (MMR)**
- **tetanus**.

Other jobs that may be risky

Other jobs that may have a higher risk of exposure to infectious diseases, or may risk spreading them to vulnerable people include:

- people who work with, care for or live with someone with reduced immunity
- laboratory personnel
- people who work with specific communities
- sewerage workers
- sex industry workers
- any job where you are exposed to blood or other bodily fluids
- people who handle human tissue at work (for example, embalmers, tattooists, body piercers, funeral workers and plumbers).

If your job is in this list, it's a good idea to talk your GP (doctor) about your immunisation status.

Where can I find my vaccination records?

Most higher risk workplaces have an immunisation policy in place, and some will keep records of any vaccinations they have given staff. However, it is a good idea for you to have an accurate **record of your vaccinations**. This means you know what diseases you are protected from, and what catch-up or booster vaccines you may need before starting work.

If you were immunised after 1996, the **Australian Immunisation Register (AIR)** will have a record of your **childhood vaccinations**.

The AIR expanded in September 2016 to capture vaccines administered to people of all ages. Remind your vaccine provider to notify any vaccine you are administered to the AIR.

The quickest way to access immunisation records on the AIR is to request an Immunisation History Statement by using a **Medicare online account** through **myGov** or the **Express Plus Medicare mobile app**.

You can also:

- phone the Australian Immunisation Register enquiry line on 1800 653 809 (Monday to Friday from 8:00 am – 5:00 pm)

- visit your local **Medicare** or **Centrelink** office.

If you were born before 1996, perhaps you or your parents have a copy of your **child health record**. If you were immunised by a **GP (doctor)**, local council (as a child or an adult) or another **immunisation provider**, you could ask whether they still have records. Workplaces may also keep a record if vaccinations are organised onsite.

Managing side effects after immunisation

Like any medication, **vaccines** can have **side effects**. These are usually mild and clear up one to two days after vaccination. Specific treatment is not usually required.

If you have a **fever**, drink more water and do not overdress. If you have soreness, redness, itching, swelling or a burning feeling at the injection site, use a cool compress to ease the discomfort. Paracetamol can be taken for fever and pain (follow the label for correct use).

There is a very small risk of a serious allergic reaction (**anaphylaxis**) to any vaccine. This is why you are advised to stay at the clinic or medical surgery for at least 15 minutes following immunisation in case further treatment is required.

Concerns about side effects of immunisation

If a side effect following immunisation is unexpected, persistent or severe, see your doctor or immunisation nurse as soon as possible or go directly to a hospital. Immunisation side effects may be reported to the **Victorian**

vaccine safety service (SAEFVIC), (Tel. 1300 882 924 and select option 1).

You can discuss with your immunisation provider how to report adverse events in other states or territories.

It is important to seek medical advice if you are unwell, as this may be due to other illness rather than because of the vaccination.

Do I have to pay for vaccines in the workplace?

Some workplaces cover the costs of vaccines for workers. For others, you may be required to pay for the cost of the vaccine and a consultation fee. It is best to check when you make your appointment.

How to reduce the spread of germs in the workplace

To reduce the **spread of germs at work** make sure to practise good hygiene. This means:

- stay home when you are not well
- **wash your hands** with soap after using the bathroom, or when you cough and sneeze
- turn away from people and cover your mouth with the inside of your elbow, a tissue or handkerchief when you cough or sneeze
- keep your workstation clean and clear of food.

Where can I get more information about immunisation?

Find out more about **immunisation** by speaking with your health professional. The best place to start is with your **GP (doctor)**. You can also ask your clinic nurse or specialist.

There is also lots of information online. If you would like to know more about immunisation, check out the Australian Government's **National Immunisation Program website**.

When looking for immunisation information, stick to reliable information providers, such as:

- Better Health Channel
- **Melbourne Vaccine Education Centre (MVEC)**

- **NPS Medicinewise**
- **National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS)**
- **Australian Academy of Science – The science of immunisation.**

What other immunisations do I need?

Remember, immunisation is for everyone, and not just for children. The vaccines we may need are decided by our health, age, lifestyle, and occupation.

Together, these factors are known as HALO. Your GP will consider these factors when recommending immunisations for you. Check your immunisation HALO using the **Immunisation for Life (pdf)** downloadable poster.

Where to get help

- Your **GP (doctor)**
- In an emergency, always call triple zero (000)
- Your local government immunisation service – (visit **Know Your Council** to find your local government authority)
- **NURSE-ON-CALL** Tel. 1300 60 60 24 – for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)
- **Immunisation Program**, Department of Health and Human Services, Victorian Government Tel. 1300 882 008
- **National Immunisation Information Line** Tel. 1800 671 811
- Pharmacist
- **Victorian vaccine safety service (SAEFVIC)** Tel. 1300 882 924 (select option 1)

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