
Immunisation in Australia

Summary

- Immunisation is one of the safest and most effective ways we know of stopping preventable diseases from spreading.
 - You cannot enrol your child in a childcare facility or kindergarten in Victoria unless they have been immunised. This is because of legislation known as 'No Jab, No Play'.
 - If you want to enrol your child at a Victorian primary school, you will need to present an immunisation status certificate.
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Immunisation is one of the safest and most effective ways we know of stopping preventable diseases from spreading.

Immunisation in Australia is recommended from an early age for all children. Having your children immunised helps to protect them from a range of serious infections, some of which can be deadly.

If you want to enrol your child at a Victorian childcare service, kindergarten or primary school, you will need to present a certificate, known as an **Immunisation History Statement** from the **Australian Immunisation Register**.

The history of immunisation in Australia

Mass vaccination is one of the most significant public health interventions we have seen in the past 200 years. Since community immunisations for the public in Australia were introduced in 1932, deaths from vaccine-preventable diseases have fallen by an incredible 99 per cent. And that figure is even more impressive because our population tripled in that time.

Before major vaccination campaigns began in Australia in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, diseases such as tetanus, diphtheria and whooping cough killed thousands of young children every year.

Today, deaths from these diseases are very rare. Worldwide, immunisation programs prevent around 3 million deaths every year.

Herd immunity

So why is mass vaccination so effective? Because if enough people are immunised, a disease cannot be passed from person to person. The disease dies out instead of spreading.

We call this 'herd immunity' (or sometimes 'community immunity'). For herd immunity to effectively stop the spread of disease, around 90 per cent of people have to be immunised.

But some diseases are so infectious the number of people that need to be immunised to protect the community is even higher. To prevent a measles outbreak, for example, around 95 per cent of the population must be immunised.

Herd immunity means we need to be vigilant about our immunisations in every community. It helps protect people who cannot be immunised because they are too young, or because of a medical condition, such as a weak immune system.

Without herd immunity, rare diseases can become common again, causing more illness and deaths.

In some circumstances, immunisations can work so well that we eradicate an entire disease. In 1980, smallpox was officially declared eradicated all over the world, after a massive immunisation campaign by the World Health Organisation.

A similar campaign has seen polio become extremely rare, with only a few isolated cases left in the world.

Immunisations available in Australia

The Australian Government provides immunisations in Australia free of charge for a range of diseases, including:

- **chicken pox**
- **diphtheria**
- **haemophilus influenzae type b (Hib)**
- **hepatitis A** (not in Victoria)
- **hepatitis B**
- **human papillomavirus**
- **influenza**
- **measles**
- **meningococcal C disease**
- **mumps**
- **pneumococcal disease**
- **polio**
- **rotavirus**
- **rubella (German measles)**
- **shingles**
- **tetanus**
- **whooping cough (pertussis)**

You can have your children immunised free of charge via the **National Immunisation Program (NIP) schedule**. If your children are at higher risk of some infections, they may be offered extra vaccinations to provide them with the best possible protection.

Victoria funds a free **influenza vaccine** for all children aged six months to less than five years. Victoria is also funding the meningococcal ACWY vaccine for young people aged 15 to 16 years.

The NIP recommends immunisations for 13 diseases for children aged from birth to four years old. Many vaccines contain combined protection against two, three, four or six diseases. Your child will need to be given some vaccines more than once to ensure they are protected.

The NIP also recommends two **vaccines for young people** aged 12 to 13 years (or in Year 7 of secondary school).

The NIP recommends **vaccines for older people** (aged 65 years and over).

Some children and adults are considered to be at higher risk of infections or other health problems. They might be offered extra immunisations – usually at no cost.

These people include:

- all children age six months to less than five years of age
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- people with particular medical conditions
- children who were born prematurely
- **people travelling overseas** (travel vaccines require a prescription).

No Jab, No Play

You cannot enrol your child in a childcare facility or kindergarten in Victoria unless they have been immunised. This is because of legislation known as 'No Jab, No Play'.

The **No Jab, No Play** law is in place to improve vaccination rates and to keep children as safe and healthy as

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possible in their early years.

When you enrol your child in a childcare facility or kindergarten, you will need to provide the service with a current Immunisation History Statement from the **Australian Immunisation Register** (AIR). The statement must show whether they are up to date with all vaccinations recommended for their age or that they are able to receive.

If a child has arrived in Australia from overseas, their overseas immunisation record must be taken to an **immunisation provider**, such as a GP (doctor) in a medical centre or a local council immunisation service. The local council service is free, medical centres may charge a service fee.

Immunisations and primary school children

If you want to enrol your child at a Victorian primary school, you will need to present an **Immunisation History Statement** from the **Australian Immunisation Register**.

You will automatically be sent an **Immunisation History Statement** when your child turns five, but you can request one at any time.

You can contact the Australian Immunisation Register by:

- telephoning 1800 653 809
- emailing acir@medicareaustralia.gov.au
- visiting www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/online.

Or you can visit your local Medicare office. Make sure you keep your address updated so you can receive your statement.

The Australian Immunisation Register keeps a record of all immunisations in Australia given to people of all ages. It helps health professionals track your immunisations especially if you attended a different vaccine provider in Australia.

You don't need to do anything to add your child to the register. They will be added automatically as a Medicare card holder.

You can access you or your child's vaccine records at any time until they are 14 years old. After this time, your child can access their own records. You can remind your doctor to send your vaccine record to the register after you have been immunised.

See the entire **immunisation schedule** to plan your family's immunisations.

All immunisations in Australia have been thoroughly tested and declared **safe to use**.

VaxOnTime

Having these immunisations at the recommended age is one of the best ways you can protect your children, your family, and your community from these diseases. And to help you keep your immunisations up to date, the

Victorian Department of Health and Human Services developed the **VaxOnTime** mobile app.

This free app provides immunisation reminders for parents living in Victoria. It prompts parents and carers with immunisation due date reminders, can help them find and make an appointment with the nearest immunisation providers, and links to trusted information on the Better Health Channel.

Where to get help

- Your GP or vaccine provider
- Australian Immunisation Register, Tel: 1800 653 809
- Victorian Department of Health & Human Services Immunisation Section, Tel: 1300 882 008

This page has been produced in consultation with and approved by:

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