
Pre-immunisation checklist

Summary

- In Australia, immunisations are available to protect us from preventable diseases.
 - You should get enough information on the risks and benefits of the vaccine to make an informed decision about whether to have that immunisation.
 - The information you get should also include information on side effects, how common they are, and what you can do about them.
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In **Australia, immunisations are available** to protect us from preventable diseases.

Before vaccination, GPs and immunisation providers will ask a number of questions to work out whether there are any risks to our health and to ensure we have all the information we need before making a decision to be immunised.

This pre-screening can also determine what vaccines we need based on our health, age, lifestyle and occupation (**HALO**).

This immunisation checklist will help you prepare so you know what to expect, and what information you will need to give your GP or clinic staff.

Who provides immunisation?

There are many different reasons why people need to be immunised, and **who delivers them can also vary**.

In Victoria, immunisation providers range from local councils, GPs, specially qualified nurses in clinics and community health services to travel clinics and some pharmacies and hospitals.

Some vaccines are free for eligible children and adults under the Australian Government's **National Immunisation Program and the Victorian government vaccine programs while others are provided at a cost**.

What to tell your GP or clinic nurse

Before receiving a vaccine, tell your GP (doctor) or nurse if you or someone in your care:

- is unwell
 - has had a severe reaction to any previous vaccines
 - has any severe allergies
 - has had any vaccine in the past month
 - has had an injection of immunoglobulin, or received any blood products, or a whole blood transfusion within the past year
 - is pregnant
 - is planning a pregnancy, or may become a parent in the near future
 - is a parent, grandparent or carer of a newborn baby
 - is a premature baby (born at less than 32 weeks), or weighed less than 2,000 grams at birth
 - is a baby, who has had an intussusception (a blockage caused by parts of the bowel sliding into one another), or who could be at risk of intussusception due to a congenital abnormality
 - is the baby of a mother who was receiving immunosuppressive therapy during the pregnancy
 - has a chronic illness
 - has a bleeding disorder
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- doesn't have a functioning spleen
- has a disease – or live with someone that has a disease – that causes lower immunity (for example, cancer or HIV)
- has a past history of Guillain-Barre syndrome
- is receiving treatment – or lives with someone who is receiving treatment – that causes lower immunity (for example, chemotherapy, radiotherapy or oral steroid medicines)
- is an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person
- is planning travel
- has an occupation or lifestyle that might require specific immunisation.

Questions from your GP or clinic nurse

Before they go ahead with any immunisation, your GP or clinic staff will ask:

- if you understand the information you've been given about the immunisation
- if you need any more information before you decide whether to vaccinate
- if you have brought any **vaccination records** with you.

Pre-immunisation screening

Doctors and clinic staff have to thoroughly screen everyone before they give a vaccine. They should also:

- ensure they have the right person to be vaccinated
- ensure they are giving the correct vaccine and dose, according to the schedule, including **catching up on missed vaccines**
- consider whether they should offer any alternative or additional vaccines
- ensure the person being immunised is within the appropriate age range for that vaccine
- check that enough time has passed since any previous vaccines.

Do you have all the information you need?

There's a lot of information available about immunisation, and it's easy for people to feel overwhelmed or not know where to start.

You may have **questions** such as:

- **Why is immunisation important?**
- **What vaccines do I or someone in my care need?**
- What are the benefits of immunisation?
- How safe are **vaccines**?
- Are there any **side effects**?
- What should I do if there are reactions to a vaccine?

Don't be afraid to ask your GP or clinic nurse if you're unsure. If you have young children, **maternal and child health nurses**, or **paediatricians** can also help.

In fact, before you agree to any vaccines, your immunisation provider has to give you all the information you need to understand what is happening, answer any questions you may have and discuss your options.

And the information has to be given to you in a language you can understand, so if you need an interpreter or a cultural support person, your GP or clinic nurse should offer you one.

You should get enough information on the risks and benefits of the vaccine for you to make an informed decision about whether to have that immunisation. This information will also include any side effects, how common they are, and what you can do about them.

Consent is important

You must consent (in writing or verbally) before a vaccine can be given. Parents or guardians will be asked to

complete a consent form for children (under 18 years) whether or not they choose to have their child vaccinated.

Your consent must be voluntary, without any pressure, coercion or manipulation. And you do not have to give your consent until your immunisation provider has explained the risks and benefits.

Remember, you can take your time before making a decision about immunisation.

Recording immunisation history

It is also important to have an **immunisation record**. Your vaccine provider should give you a record of the vaccinations received for you to keep at home.

All immunisation providers should notify every vaccine they administer to the **Australian Immunisation Register (AIR)**.

The register started for children in 1996 then expanded to adults from September 2016. Remind your vaccine provider to notify the register each time you are vaccinated.

There are a number of ways to access immunisation records on the AIR. The quickest 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.

Records prior to 1996, were usually kept locally, (such as with the local council immunisation service, GP, hospital or travel clinic). They may also have been recorded in a baby health book and given to parents or carers to keep at home.

Keeping childhood immunisations up to date

Once children have started immunisation, it is really important to **keep their vaccinations up to date** to help protect them from serious childhood infections.

It is also a legal requirement to provide an **Immunisation History Statement** when you enrol your child in childcare, kindergarten or primary school in Victoria.

One of the most common reasons children fall behind in their immunisations is because parents simply forget, especially as the vaccinations become more spread out.

Parents from Victoria can download the free **MCH app** for trusted information matched to the age of your child, at your fingertips! The app can also track your child's growth, and remind you about upcoming MCH appointments or immunisations.

Your local council or GP can immunise your child to **'catch up' on any missed vaccine doses**.

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. 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
- **Raising Children Network**
- **Melbourne Vaccine Education Centre (MVEC)**
- **NPS Medicinewise**
- **National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS)**
- **Australian Academy of Science – The science of immunisation.**

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 & Human Services, Victorian Government Tel. 1300 882 008
- **National Immunisation Information** Line Tel. 1800 671 811
- **Maternal and Child Health Line** (24 hours) Tel. 132 229
- Pharmacist
- **Victorian vaccine safety service (SAEFVIC)** Tel. 1300 882 924 (select option 1)– the line is attended between 9 am and 4 pm and you can leave a message at all other times

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

Department of Health and Human Services - RHP&R - Health Protection - Communicable Disease Prevention and Control Unit

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