
Immunisation in secondary schools

Summary

- Certain immunisations are recommended for all Australian secondary school students.
 - You can receive immunisations from your doctor, local health clinic or local council.
 - Side effects to vaccinations are usually mild, occur soon after the injection and last for only a short time.
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Every day, immunisation saves lives by reducing the spread of disease.

Immunisation protects people who have been immunised. It also protects those in the community who may be unable to receive immunisation themselves.

Many vaccines are provided free of charge to Australian secondary school students under the **National Immunisation Program**. Immunisation is most commonly given to students through council visits to secondary schools. Parents must return a card to the school providing or refusing their consent.

Immunisation for secondary school students is important

Immunisation is a proven and safe way to protect against diseases that cause serious illness and sometimes death.

The protection provided by some childhood immunisations fades over time and needs to be boosted in adolescence. Secondary school students are at an age when a vaccine will be most effective and provide protection before possible exposure to a disease.

Parental consent for immunisation

In Victoria, an information and consent form is provided by local councils to all secondary schools. Students must take the form home and have it completed and signed by their parent or guardian. The completed consent section must be returned to the school before the student can receive immunisation.

The form contains information about:

- the vaccines
- the diseases they protect against
- possible side effects
- the circumstances in which someone should not have the vaccines (known as 'contraindications').

Parents can say no to the offer of free, school-based immunisation for children in their care under the age of 18. If they do so, the consent section of the form still needs to be returned (marked as 'declined'). This is so authorities can collect data on immunisation coverage.

Immunisation nurses provide the vaccines

Local councils work with secondary schools to arrange for immunisation nurses to be at the school on a particular day. Nurses inject the vaccines into the muscle of the upper part of the student's non-writing arm.

On the day that students are receiving immunisation, it's recommended that they eat a good breakfast and wear clothing that provides easy access to their upper arm.

Students can watch the '**School immunisation**' video to see how other students feel about getting immunised.

Victorian Immunisation Schedule for secondary school students

Some vaccines are routinely provided free of charge to all Victorian secondary school students under the National Immunisation Program.

Available at secondary school	Available at community health setting (GP or council session)	Vaccine type	Vaccine doses	Possible mild reactions and treatment
Year 7	12–13 years of age	Human papillomavirus (HPV)	Course of two vaccines, given a minimum of six months apart. Note: immunocompromised children or children from 15 years of age, require 3 vaccines given over a minimum of 6 months.	Mild temperature, mild headache, feeling unwell – take paracetamol as directed, drink extra fluids, don't overdress. Soreness, redness or swelling at the injection site - press a cold, wet cloth against the injection site.
Years 7	12–13 years of age	Diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (whooping cough) (combined vaccine)	Single dose.	Mild temperature, feeling unwell – take paracetamol as directed, drink extra fluids, don't overdress Soreness, redness or swelling at the injection site - press a cold, wet cloth against the injection site.
Year 10	15–16 years of age	Meningococcal ACWY	Single dose.	Mild temperature, feeling unwell, headache - take paracetamol as directed, drink extra fluids, don't overdress. Soreness, redness or swelling at the injection site - press a cold, wet cloth against the injection site.

Reactions to immunisation

Some secondary school students faint after immunisation. If a child is known to faint or be very anxious, it may be better for them to be vaccinated with the GP rather than at school.

Some people may experience a reaction to a vaccine. There is a very small risk of a serious allergic reaction to any vaccine. This is why it is important to stay at the school or clinic where the immunisation was given for at least 15 minutes after being immunised.

If reactions do occur, they are usually mild and occur shortly after immunisation. Reactions may last up to two

days. If you are concerned about any reaction to the vaccine, contact your council, doctor or hospital.

Concerns about immunisation side effects

If a side effect following immunisation is unexpected, persistent or severe, or if you are worried about yourself or your child's condition after immunisation, see your doctor or immunisation nurse as soon as possible, or go directly to a hospital.

It is important to seek medical advice if you (or your child) are unwell, as this may be due to other illness rather than because of the immunisation.

Immunisation side effects may be reported to the **Victorian vaccine safety service**, the central reporting service in Victoria, on **1300 882 924** (select option one). You can discuss with your immunisation provider how to report adverse events in other states or territories.

When a vaccine at school is missed

If a school-based immunisation is missed for any reason, secondary school students can visit their local council immunisation service or a doctor to receive the missed vaccine. This should be done as soon as possible.

If the missed dose is part of a course of vaccines and is given soon after the missed school session, the rest of the course can often be finished as part of the school-based program.

Some vaccines may need to be ordered in advance, so let your doctor know which immunisation you are wanting when you arrange the appointment. Although the vaccines themselves are free, your doctor may charge a consultation fee.

When students don't attend a mainstream secondary school

Teenagers who do not attend mainstream schools are also encouraged to receive these immunisations. See your GP or local council immunisation service.

Other available immunisations for secondary school students

Other immunisations are available for students depending on their health, age, lifestyle or occupation (HALO). Doctors can provide advice on catching up on any early childhood immunisations that may have been missed, or any other immunisations that may be needed.

You can check your immunisation HALO using the **Immunisation for Life** infographic.

Where to get help

- Your **GP (doctor)**
- Your local community health centre
- Your local council
- **NURSE-ON-CALL** Tel. **1300 60 60 24** – for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)
- **Immunisation Section, Department of Health and Human Services** Tel. **1300 882 008**

- **Immunise Australia Information Line** Tel. **1800 671 811**
- **SAEFVIC** Tel. **1300 882 924** – 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:

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