
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 and makes it possible for Victorians to live free from the illness and the disability caused by many infectious diseases.

Immunisation not only protects those people who have been immunised, but it also protects those in the community who may be unable to receive immunisation themselves, by reducing the spread of disease.

Many vaccines are routinely 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 be protected 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, a consent booklet is provided by councils to schools. Students are required to take the booklet home and have it completed and signed by their parent or guardian. The completed section of consent booklet is detached and must be returned to the school before the student can receive immunisation.

The consent booklet contains information about the vaccines, the diseases protected against and possible side effects.

Parents can decline the offer of free school-based immunisation for children in their care under the age of 18, however, the consent section of the booklet should still be returned (marked as 'declined') 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 using a fine needle, usually to 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 clothes that provide 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

The following 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 (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 A-C-W-Y	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 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 15 minutes after being immunised.

If reactions do occur, they are usually mild and occur shortly after immunisation. Possible reactions to specific vaccines and how they can be treated are listed in the table above. 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 (03) 9345 4143/1300 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. Immunisation will only be free for the ages listed in the immunisation schedule.

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

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 additional immunisations that may be required.

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

Where to get help

- Your GP
- 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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