

Immunisation information for parents of school-aged children

Frequently asked questions

Why immunise?

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 vaccines themselves by reducing the spread of disease in the community. Immunisation is a proven and safe way to be protected against diseases that cause serious illness and sometimes death.

Who can be immunised for free and when?

Different immunisations are recommended and available for free depending on a person's health, age, lifestyle and occupation (HALO).

In Victoria, immunisations can be accessed through your local council or doctor. Many vaccines are free but your doctor may charge a consultation fee.

For more information regarding recommended immunisations, refer to the HALO fact sheet at <http://health.vic.gov.au/immunisation/factsheets.htm>

What if my child has missed a vaccine?

It is very important your child receives the recommended childhood vaccines on time. If your child has missed any of the vaccines, speak with your local council or doctor regarding a catch-up.

I am enrolling my child in primary school and they want an immunisation record – why?

A record of your child's immunisations must be presented to your child's primary school on enrolment. This record is very important in assisting health authorities to protect children in the event of a vaccine preventable disease occurrence in school. An unvaccinated child may be excluded

from school for a period of time to reduce the spread of the disease.

Further information regarding school entry immunisation status certificates and accessing your child's immunisation record can be found at <http://health.vic.gov.au/immunisation/factsheets/starting-primary-school.htm>

What about immunisation in secondary school?

The protection provided by some childhood vaccines gradually disappears over time so needs to be boosted in adolescence. The government also funds some vaccines specifically for adolescents because they are at an age when the vaccine will be most effective and will provide protection before they can be exposed to a disease.

Immunisations are recommended for students in Year 7 and Year 10 of secondary school. In Victoria, students are eligible to receive free vaccines for their continued protection.

Adolescents who do not attend mainstream schools are also eligible for free vaccines and should contact their local council or doctor in the year they are due so that they do not miss out. Adolescents must have the vaccines at the targeted age to be eligible for free vaccine. If the vaccine is part of a course and the course is not finished in that year, the adolescent has until the end of the next year to finish the course of vaccine for free. After this time the vaccine must be purchased on prescription.

Sometimes new vaccines become available in Australia and additional school-based vaccine programs are introduced. Information will always be given to parents when this occurs. Sometimes a catch-up vaccine program ends, such as the hepatitis B vaccine program, which finishes at the end of 2013 for Year 7 students. This occurs because the vaccine has already been given to the students when they were babies.

What vaccines are offered free to adolescents?

Year 7 (about 12 to 13 years old)

Chickenpox (Varicella) vaccine

This vaccine is given if your child has never had the chickenpox disease or you are not sure if they had chickenpox in the past. It consists of a single injection. Find out more at:

www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation/resources/chickenpox-vaccination-year-seven-program.htm

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine

A three dose course of this vaccine is given to all Year 7 students with two months between the first and second dose and four months between the second and third dose. Find out more about HPV:

www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation/resources/human-papillomavirus.htm

Important note: Some Year 7 students may need to have two vaccines on the same day. More than one injection does not increase the chance of a student having a reaction to the vaccines. To make sure your child is protected against the disease, it is recommended they receive all the due vaccines on the same day.

Year 10 (about 15 to 16 years old)

Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough) vaccine

This vaccine protects against the three diseases in a single injection. Find out more at:

www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation/resources/adolescent-diphtheria.htm

Who will give the vaccines in school?

Each year local councils contact all the secondary schools in their area to arrange dates to visit the schools and hold immunisation sessions. Local councils employ immunisation nurses.

What do I need to do?

Look out for the immunisation information and consent form that your child should bring home from school. Read the information, complete the consent form and return it to school as quickly as possible. If you consent for your child to be immunised, explain to them that immunisation is important and everyone must have these vaccines when they are adolescents for protection against disease. Encourage your child to eat breakfast on the day the immunisation session is scheduled.

Encourage your child to wear loose clothing so that the upper arm below the shoulder is easily seen (the injection is given into the upper arm.)

What if my child misses their vaccines at school?

You can take your child to a local council immunisation service by contacting your council at: www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation/resources/local-councils.htm

You can also make an appointment with your doctor to catch-up missed vaccine. It is important for your child to follow up with the missed vaccine as soon as possible so they will be eligible to receive the vaccine for free. If the missed dose is part of a course of vaccines and is given soon after the missed school session, your child can usually finish the course at school with the rest of their class.

What if I prefer my child to have their vaccines at the doctor?

It is important to return the consent card declining the vaccine at school. Inform your doctor that you are attending for the school immunisation. The vaccines are free but your doctor may charge a consultation fee.

The HPV vaccine for Year 7 students may need to be ordered in advance for your child, so allow time for your doctor to do this when you arrange your appointment. Remember to take your child to the doctor in the year they are eligible for free vaccines.

Where can I get more information?

- your local council immunisation service at: www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation/resources/local-councils.htm
- your doctor
- www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation

Translations



If you require the interpreting service to talk about this information with your local council immunisation service please call 131 450. The immunisation information and consent form has been translated into many languages at www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation/factsheets/language.htm

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