



3 February 2022

## IMMUNISATION FOR CHILDREN IN OUT-OF-HOME CARE INFORMATION FOR CARERS

### WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

- Children living in out-of-home care are often behind with their immunisations.
- Regardless of the age of the child, it is important to ensure their immunisations are up to date.
- You can provide consent for a child to receive a vaccine(s) if you have a child-specific instrument of authorisation or standard authorisation issued by the child's Community Service Organisation or Child Protection.
- You will need to provide an immunisation history statement from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) to enrol or attend kindergarten, childcare and primary school. Children in out-of-home care can enrol while you are getting the Immunisation History Statement or arranging for catch-up vaccines.
- Family Tax and Child Care Benefits payments may stop if a child is not up to date with vaccinations or have a medical exemption.

### Why is immunisation important?

Immunisation is an essential part of health care. It is considered routine medical care. It protects those who have been vaccinated and protects those in our community who may be unable to receive vaccines themselves by reducing the spread of disease.

### How do I know if the child in my care is up to date with their immunisations?

The National Immunisation Program schedule provides free, routine immunisations at 2,4,6,12 and 18 months of age, 4 years of age and in Year 7 and 10 of secondary school <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/immunisation/immunisation-throughout-life/national-immunisation-program-schedule>

If any of these schedule points are missed, children require catch-up vaccines.

### Where do I go for immunisations?

A GP or local council immunisation service can provide these vaccines for free. Some GPs may charge for administering the vaccines. They can decide if the child needs catch-up vaccines by talking to you and looking at the child's immunisation history on the AIR. Sometimes catch up vaccines require several visits to the immunisation provider. Catch-up vaccines are for free to all children and adolescents in Victoria under 20 years of age.

### Who can consent for immunisations?

The carer can if they have a child-specific instrument of authorisation specifying routine medical care or standard authorisation issued by the Community Service Organisation (CSO) or Child Protection. Immunisations are considered routine medical care (and are specifically excluded from the definition of 'major long-term issue' in section 3 of the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005).

You need to take a copy of this authorisation to the immunisation appointment as evidence that you can provide consent to immunisations for the child.

### What if I don't have those authorisations?

Talk to the Child Protection Practitioner (CPP) or CSO about giving consent for immunisations.

If you don't have a child-specific instrument of authorisation or standard authorisation, you cannot give consent for a child to receive a vaccine. The CPP or CSO case manager is required to seek the appropriate instrument of authorisation. Alternatively, the delegated officer within the agency (usually the CEO or equivalent) or Child Protection (Case Planner or equivalent) will be required to sign the vaccine consent booklet.



# Kinship Care in the time of Coronavirus

## Can adolescents provide their own consent?

Yes, if the immunisation provider decides the adolescent is mature enough to provide their own valid consent for vaccination.

- Refer to the Victorian Education Department guideline: <https://www2.education.vic.gov.au/pal/mature-minors-and-decision-making/policy>

## Steps for getting the child vaccinated

### 1. Obtain a child-specific instrument of authorisation or a standard authorisation.

These are provided to you by the Child Protection Practitioner (CPP) or through the CSO.

### 2. Book an appointment with your GP.

Book a long appointment within one month of entering care and every year after that.

Take a copy of the child-specific instrument of authorisation or the standard authorisation to the appointment.

What the GP can do:

- check the AIR to look at the child's immunisation history
- provide free immunisations and tell you if and when more vaccines are due
- determine if there is a medical reason why the child can't be fully immunised
- update the child's immunisation history on AIR
- provide you with a copy of the child's immunisation history statement from AIR.

## What if I need to enrol the child in childcare or school in Victoria?

### Childcare or kindergarten

To enrol a child in childcare or kindergarten, an up-to-date immunisation history statement from the AIR must be provided which shows the child is fully vaccinated for their age.

You can ask the CPP or CSO or your GP to provide you with a copy of the child's immunisation history statement.

Children in out-of-home care are eligible for the 'grace period', which allows the child to enrol and start at childcare or kindergarten while you are arranging to get an immunisation history statement and/or starting catch-up vaccines for the child. Just tell the childcare or kindergarten service that the child is in out-of-home care with you and provide the statement to the service as soon as you have it.

- Immunisation information for parents/carers enrolling a child in childcare or kindergarten: <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/publications/parent-brochure-starting-childcare-or-kindergarten-immunisation-information-for>

## Primary school

To enrol a child in primary school you need to provide the school with the child's most recent Immunisation History Statement from the AIR.

The child does not need to be fully immunised to enrol in primary school.

The school keeps a copy of the statement. In the event of a disease outbreak, unimmunised children or children who have not presented a statement are excluded from attending school until the risk of infection has passed.

## Secondary school

You do not need any special immunisation documentation to enrol a child in secondary school.

If the child is enrolling in Year 7 or Year 10 be aware that vaccines are given at school to students in these year levels.

Look out for the vaccine consent booklet coming home from the school. Sign and return the consent booklet to the child's secondary school if you have been issued with an instrument of authorisation.

If you do not have an instrument of authorisation, check with the CPP or CSO about who should sign the vaccine consent booklet.

If an adolescent is not attending secondary school, or misses the vaccination day at school, they can receive the vaccines from a GP or local council immunisation service.

For privacy reasons, children aged from 14 years must access their own immunisation history statement. Given this, carers require consent from the child to access their immunisation statement. More information is available at <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/services/medicare/australian-immunisation-register/how-get-immunisation-history-statement#14orolder>

## What if I have more questions?

- Speak to the child protection practitioner or case manager, a GP or a local council immunisation service
- Visit the Better Health Channel at <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/healthyliving/immunisation>

To receive this publication in an accessible format email [immunisation@health.vic.gov.au](mailto:immunisation@health.vic.gov.au)

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