

Secondary school immunisation: a guide for schools

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This guide is an initiative of Victorian Department of Health Barwon-South Western and Grampians Regions. It has been revised and updated by the Victorian Department of Health Immunisation Section in January 2018. If you would like any further information regarding this initiative, please contact the Immunisation Section on 1300 882 008 or email immunisation@dhhs.vic.gov.au.

This document is available as a PDF on the internet (please visit the [Immune Hero](#) website).

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Foreword

Every day immunisation saves lives and makes it possible for Victorians to live free from illness and disability caused by many infectious diseases. Immunisation protects both those people who have been immunised and those in the community who may be unable to receive vaccines themselves, by reducing the spread of disease.

The protection provided by some childhood vaccines fades and needs to be boosted in adolescence. Adolescents are at an age when a vaccine will be most effective and provides protection before they may be exposed to a disease. Over the past few years there has been a gradual and concerning decline in school vaccination rates for particular vaccine-preventable diseases in Victoria.

Together with immunisation providers and the education sector, Victoria's Department of Health is trialling a number of Regional Immunisation Initiatives across the state in an effort to increase secondary school immunisation rates.

As part of this initiative, the Department of Health Barwon-South Western and Grampians Regions have developed this guide for secondary schools. The aim of this guide is to:

- clarify the roles and responsibilities of schools and immunisation providers
- formalise arrangements and build on existing relationships between schools and immunisation providers
- make a positive impact on schools' consent form return rates and therefore increase the rates of immunisation in secondary schools.

Victoria's secondary schools can have a positive impact on immunisation rates by working collaboratively with immunisation providers to enhance access to school immunisation and raise awareness among students and parents and guardians of the importance of immunisation.



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Acknowledgements

The *Secondary school immunisation: a guide for schools* was originally developed by a regional working group, consisting of Barwon-South Western and Grampians, as part of the Victorian Department of Health Regional Immunisation Initiatives. We would like to thank all of the individuals involved for their enthusiasm and commitment to the process of developing this resource. We would also like to thank all the stakeholders who provided valued feedback.

We acknowledge the Department of Health Immunisation Section for their support of the project.

The Department of Health Immunisation Section has since revised and updated the *Secondary school immunisation: a guide for schools* in January 2018.

About this guide

This is a practical guide for school immunisation coordinators and other school staff who are involved in school-based vaccine programs.

It provides step-by-step information and advice about coordinating the vaccine program in your school.

The guide is divided into four parts:

- roles and responsibilities
- steps for a successful vaccine program
- what to do on vaccine day
- Appendices with useful links and templates to help coordinate your vaccine program.

This guide is provided to you by your immunisation provider and is supported by a **template for an annual agreement** between your immunisation provider and your school (available on [Immune Hero](#)) that confirms the plans and schedules for your school vaccine program.

Roles and responsibilities

Councils are mandated under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008* to provide immunisation services to children living or being educated within their municipal district. Councils coordinate and deliver vaccine programs to secondary schools.

The current vaccine program schedule for Victorian schools is outlined in Table 1.

Table 1: Victoria’s School Vaccine Program in 2018

Vaccine	Eligibility in the school-based program	Eligibility in community health setting
HPV (human papillomavirus)	Year 7	12 – 13 years of age
Diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis	Year 7	12 – 13 years of age
Meningococcal A,C,W,Y	Year 10	15 – 16 years of age

Source: [DHHS Immunisation](#)

Immunisation provider

In this guide the council or its contractor is referred to as the immunisation provider. The role of the provider is to:

- undertake administrative tasks associated with the program
- deliver the vaccinations to students on vaccine day.

Nurse immunisers are either employed directly by the council or through a contracted immunisation provider, usually a health service.

Table 2: Immunisation provider’s roles and responsibilities

Coordinate	Consent	Service delivery
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiate contact with schools • Provide schools with Council’s email contact details • Negotiate agreement with schools • Deliver consent forms and resources for schools to distribute • Maintain collaboration with schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review consent forms for completeness and eligibility • Follow up non-returned, incomplete or incorrectly completed consent forms • Obtain on-the-spot telephone consent from parent or guardians where appropriate (nurse immunisers only) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure students are eligible to receive vaccines on the day • Deliver the vaccine(s) on vaccine day • Monitor students for 15 minutes after vaccination • Deal with adverse reactions to vaccine(s) • Follow up students who have missed vaccine(s) • Record and analyse immunisation data • Report immunisation data to national immunisation registers and the Victorian Department of Health

School

The role of the school is to:

- appoint a school immunisation coordinator to manage the school's immunisation program
- ensure the school immunisation coordinator liaises with the immunisation provider
- send student and parent/carer contact details by email to your council immunisation provider as permitted by the *Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009*
- support the distribution and collection of all immunisation consent forms and collect returned forms from parents/carers
- make use of vaccine resources provided by the immunisation provider to communicate with students, parents or guardians, teachers and the wider school community about school-age immunisation
- ensure appropriate resources and environments are available for the program to run smoothly

School Immunisation Coordinator

The school immunisation coordinator is the key contact for the immunisation provider. They are responsible for ensuring student and parent/carer contact details are emailed to councils and the distribution and collection of consent forms. They are also responsible for arranging a suitable area for vaccination to take place on the designated vaccine program days.

Previous experience shows that school immunisation works best when the school immunisation coordinator is supported by staff members including the principal, teachers, and other school staff. Each of these staff members has an important role to play.

Who can be a school immunisation coordinator?

The school principal can appoint the school immunisation coordinator from a number of different positions within the school. A health background is not required to be a school immunisation coordinator, as the immunisation provider has all the health expertise required. The more important attributes are enthusiasm, communication and strong organisational skills.

Table 3 provides examples of school staff involvement in the school vaccine program.

Table 3: Whole-of-school approach to immunisation

Coordinate	Consent	Communicate
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sign agreement with immunisation provider• Appoint school coordinator• Provide student and parent/carer contact details in class groups to immunisation provider• Plan and facilitate vaccine days• Supervise students on vaccine day	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Distribute consent forms• Collect consent forms and sort into class groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Liaise with immunisation provider• Communicate with parents or guardians• Raise awareness among students and staff• Use health promotion resources provided by immunisation provider and the Victorian Department of Health• Relay to the immunisation provider any questions or concerns raised by parents or guardians, students or staff (for example, concerns about side effects)

Data transfer from schools to immunisation provider

Schools are authorised under the *Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2009* to provide student and parent/carer contact details (for those students eligible for school based vaccines) to the council immunisation provider so that Councils can follow up any non-returned consent forms with parents directly. Updates and changes to contact details should be communicated to council throughout the year. For further information for parents/carers please refer to the Collection Statement available on [Immune Hero](#).

Please click on the following links for further information about the Request for Information and instructions regarding the extraction of the relevant information:

- Department of Education and Training [School Policy – Immunisation](#).
- The [Immune Hero](#) website

Privacy obligations

In managing the collection and transfer of student and parent/carer contact details, and the consent form distribution and collection process, schools are required to abide by the *Information Privacy Act 2000* and the *Health Records Act 2001*. This legislation prescribes the standards for the collection, handling and disposal of personal and health information. Schools must ensure confidentiality by:

- ensuring records are secure, for example, by storing them in a locked filing cabinet
- preserving confidentiality when handling written or oral information
- conducting personal interviews in a private environment
- training staff in information-handling procedures
- monitoring access to databases and systems that contain personal and health information
- periodically reviewing appropriate access levels to databases and systems and data security arrangements.

Further information is available in the Department of Education and Training School policy and advisory guide: [Privacy](#).

Steps for a successful immunisation program

See Also Appendix A: Eight tips for a successful school vaccine program

Step 1: Liaise with the immunisation provider

Immunisation providers usually start their school vaccine program planning cycle prior to the commencement of the school year. Your local Council will be in touch with your school between September and December; however, schools are encouraged to contact the immunisation provider at any time during the year.

Step 2: Confirm dates for school immunisation

Immunisation providers are delivering programs in numerous settings and need to pre-order expensive vaccines and arrange for staffing and resources. There will be a minimum of three immunisation days throughout the year scheduled as per your agreement. Under some circumstances your immunisation provider may negotiate additional days. It is important that your school adheres to the dates you've committed to in your agreement.

Make sure your proposed dates have been checked against your school calendar.

Don't waste valuable vaccines – plan ahead!

Vaccines are expensive – some vaccines can cost up to a \$100 or more! .

The government funds the cost of vaccines delivered by your immunisation provider at schools so that every young person can access immunisation.

Once the vaccines are capped on the morning of vaccine day they **must** be used – or disposed of. Vaccine disposal is expensive.

Step 3: Enter immunisation dates into the school calendar

Marking dates in the school calendar ensures that all staff are aware of upcoming commitments. It is also important to book appropriate rooms and equipment for the days of vaccination. A checklist is provided in Appendix B that steps through all the requirements for setting up a suitable vaccination area.

Step 4: Complete and sign agreement

A signed agreement formalises the arrangements agreed to between schools and immunisation providers in order to streamline the delivery of the school vaccine program and promotes review of your schools participation at the end of the year. Please ensure each section of the agreement is complete and accurate. The agreement can be found on [Immune Hero](#).

Step 5: Provide school and student information

Week 1 of the School Year, schools are required to distribute the Collection Statement (available on [Immune Hero](#)) to all students in Year 7 and Year 10.

Record any objections from parents/carers. Electronically transfer contact details for those students and parents/carers who **have not** opted out to your council as soon as possible after the school census date - 28 February 2018. For further instructions about how to extract the relevant information from your school system, please go to the [Immune Hero](#) website.

Step 6: Receive consent forms and information packs

Your immunisation provider will supply you with consent forms and printed immunisation resources. Some immunisation providers will organise information packs to be distributed with the consent forms.

For more health promotion resources please go to the [Immune Hero](#) website.

Step 7: Distribute consent forms and information packs

It is recommended that a coordinated approach is taken to distribute consent forms (for example, through homeroom classes) and that forms are returned to the school within seven to 10 days.

Timing for distribution of consent forms depends on the annual immunisation planning cycle of your immunisation provider. It could be either at the end of the previous school year or at the beginning of the school year prior to the first vaccine day.

Step 8: Raise awareness about immunisation

It is important to communicate vaccine day dates and times with parents and guardians, students and school staff.

Providing positive messages and appropriate health information to students and parents /carers (especially in their own language) will help them to understand the importance of immunisation and encourage students to be vaccinated.

A range of reliable and engaging resources designed to raise awareness about immunisation for teachers, students and parents are available at the [Immune Hero](#) website (see Appendix D).

Step 9: Collect and sort consent forms into class groups

Students should bring consent forms back to school, signed by their parent or guardian. Both 'YES' and 'NO' forms must be collected. It is the school's goal to collect **100 per cent** of the consent forms. It is not the responsibility of the school to review or ensure consent forms are appropriately completed. Sorting consent forms into class groups facilitates the smooth operation of vaccine administration on the day.

It is important to note that completed consent forms constitute a health record and schools must abide by legislative privacy requirements in relation to how this information is collected, used, disclosed and stored. See the previous section: *Roles and responsibilities – School*.

Step 10: Provide sorted forms to immunisation provider

The council immunisation provider will arrange for the collection of returned forms from the school. They will follow up consent forms (including those students who have not returned a form) directly with the students and parents/carers using the contact details your school provided at the beginning of the year.

Step 11: Pre-plan vaccine days

Ensure resources for the day are booked and organised (see Appendix B). This includes room bookings, staffing, and the vaccine day timetable, which determines the order in which the students proceed to be vaccinated.

The vaccine day timetable is usually organised by class. This is best done with the participation of year-level coordinators and homeroom teachers, as they are aware of class sizes, timetables and class commitments. The school is responsible for providing staff to supervise students as they are vaccinated. Appendix C provides tips on communicating with students and parents/carers about immunisation.

Step 12: Facilitate vaccine days

The school has a responsibility to facilitate vaccine days and ensure students are supervised at all times. It is the key responsibility of the council immunisation provider to ensure medical eligibility, administration of vaccines and appropriate care post vaccination. For more detail please see the next section entitled *What to do on vaccine day*.

Step 13: Communicate with your immunisation provider

It is important to relay to your immunisation provider any questions or concerns raised by parents/carers students or staff after student vaccination, for example, concerns about side effects.

Common adverse events following the administration of vaccines are usually mild and temporary (generally occurring in the first few days after vaccination, but occasionally occurring several weeks following vaccination). If concerns are raised you should contact your immunisation provider.

Step 14: Continue to collect consent forms

It is important schools forward any consent forms that are returned to school throughout the year to council. This ensures that each eligible student has the opportunity to receive free vaccination and protection against particular diseases.

Step 15: End-of-cycle review and planning for next year

The school immunisation coordinator should take the opportunity at the end of the year to consider what went well, and what could be improved for the following year. The council will provide you with feedback about your consent form return rate and the percentage of students vaccinated.

Ready Reference: What to do on vaccine day

Preparation for vaccine day

Equipment availability

Ensure tables, chairs and privacy screens are available in the allocated room for immunisation providers to set up as necessary. Please refer to the vaccination area checklist in Appendix B to ensure you have all the equipment needed for set-up on vaccine day.

Meet and greet your immunisation provider

The immunisation provider team will arrive at the school at the agreed time and report to the front office or reception area. They will ensure that consent forms have been correctly completed and that the required number of pre-drawn vaccines is available.

The immunisation provider team will set up and prepare all the equipment before they start immunising.

The vaccination process

Designated school staff will escort the students to the vaccination waiting area according to the vaccine day timetable.

Student check-in

Consent forms are normally given to all students who have returned a form marked 'YES'. The students then proceed to the vaccine area, where immunisation providers will complete a pre-vaccine checklist and ensure the student is eligible to receive the vaccine(s).

If eligible, students will be administered the vaccine(s).

Vaccine record

The immunisation provider will ensure that each student receives a written record of the vaccines they received to take home.

Monitoring students after vaccination

After receiving a vaccine(s), students must be seated for a minimum of 15 minutes in an adjacent area, within close proximity to the immunisation provider team. Students should be supervised in this area by a class teacher. It is important that any student who appears pale, unwell or distressed is immediately reported to the immunisation provider team for closer monitoring.

Departure of the immunisation provider team

It is the responsibility of the immunisation provider to remain at the school until all students have completed the 15-minute waiting period and arrangements have been made for any student who is unwell or anxious.

Some common issues

Students who feel anxious or unwell

Anxious students should be encouraged to go to the front of the line to avoid waiting. Alert your immunisation provider of any student who is looking or reporting feeling anxious or unwell. If a student is unwell it is the responsibility of the immunisation provider to assess the student's condition and determine their eligibility for vaccines.

Please note: All students are deemed eligible unless deemed ineligible by a medical professional.

If a student presents without a consent form

If a student presents for vaccination and wishes to receive vaccine, but has not previously returned a consent form, the immunisation provider may obtain verbal consent from the student's parent or guardian via telephone. Immunisation providers implement different policies in relation to following up with students who have not returned a consent card prior to the day of vaccination.

If a student attends but refuses to be immunised

The immunisation provider will make every effort to reason with and vaccinate eligible students without being forceful. If the student continues to refuse, a member of the immunisation provider team will contact the parent or guardian in one of the following ways to discuss alternative options for vaccination:

- by phone with the student present
- following the vaccine day session by phone, letter or email to organise a catch-up vaccine.

Absent students

If a student is absent on the vaccine day, the school coordinator should return their completed consent form to the immunisation provider. It is the responsibility of the immunisation provider to follow up with the parents or guardians of students who are absent on vaccine day. The immunisation provider will contact the parent or guardian via a letter, phone call or email to offer a catch-up session.

End-of-cycle mop-up

To achieve maximum coverage, immunisation providers may offer 'mop-up' activities for those students who have not completed their recommended immunisation schedule. Your immunisation provider will inform the school immunisation coordinator of available 'mop-up' activities. This may include the scheduling of an additional vaccine day, the option for some students to receive catch-up vaccine with their peers in other classes, or accessing a community session.

Appendix A: Eight tips for a successful school vaccine program

- | | | |
|---|----------------------|---|
| ✓ | Planning | Start planning at the beginning of the annual vaccine program planning cycle. |
| ✓ | Preparation | Schedule your vaccine days and organise the vaccination area well before the first vaccine day. |
| ✓ | Communication | Give the students and parents or guardians as much information as you can – this will encourage them to take immunisation seriously. |
| ✓ | Cooperation | Establish a good working relationship with the immunisation provider team and share information with them early on in the year. |
| ✓ | Teamwork | Previous experience shows that school vaccination works best when the school immunisation coordinator is supported by other staff members including the principal, teachers, and other school staff. Each of these staff members has an important role to play. |
| ✓ | Follow up | The school should be working towards a 100 per cent consent form return , and should put systems and processes in place to achieve this. |
| ✓ | Promotion | Promote Immunisation and encourage students and parents or guardians to return their consent forms – this will pay off in higher vaccination participation rates and better health outcomes for young people. |
| ✓ | Review | Learn from each year to make the next year a better process. |

Appendix B: Vaccination area checklist

Does / will the vaccination area have:	Yes	No
A place for students to wait that is suitable for all weather conditions, and where they can't see the vaccinations being delivered?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Separate entry to and exit from the vaccination area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mobile screens for students' privacy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Availability of a separate space for the vaccination procedure that affords extra privacy to individual students being vaccinated if needed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A separate space for students to sit and be observed for 15 minutes post vaccination that is not immediately visible to the vaccination area?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gym mats for students to lie down on if they feel faint during or following vaccination?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enough school staff to supervise the students before vaccination and for 15 minutes immediately following vaccination?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Enough tables and chairs (for administration, the nurse immunisers and the students being vaccinated)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Integration aides accompanying students with special needs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adequate lighting?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Adequate heating / cooling?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Hand washing facilities within easy reach?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Power points?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

The ideal vaccination area would be:

- on the ground floor
- away from stairs
- in an area with mobile phone reception or within easy reach of a landline phone
- spacious and free of clutter
- quiet.

If you have any concerns about the availability of items in this check list please discuss them with your immunisation provider.

Appendix C: Messages for communicating with parents or guardians and students

Messages for communicating with parents or guardians

Protect both your child's and community's health by immunising your child because when enough people are immunised, diseases no longer spread.

- All consent forms need to be returned. You need to either consent to your child receiving the vaccination by marking 'YES' on the consent form or refuse by marking 'NO' on the consent form.
- The consent form should be returned by [provide a specific date].
- On vaccine day your child should wear loose and comfortable clothing, for example, their sports uniform.
- Let the school know as soon as possible if your child is going to be absent on vaccine day.
- Parents and guardians are not required to attend with their children on vaccine day.
- If your child misses a vaccine day for any reason, please contact the immunisation provider to organise a catch-up vaccination [provide a telephone number].
- If you have any questions or concerns you should ring the school immunisation coordinator [provide telephone number] or your immunisation provider [provide telephone number].

Messages for communicating with students

- Yes, needles hurt – but only for a second! The benefits far outweigh a little discomfort.
- Make sure you eat breakfast on vaccine day morning.
- Bring an extra snack and drink with you on vaccine day to avoid getting faint or dehydrated.
- Wear loose and comfortable clothing on vaccine day, for example, your sports uniform.
- Leave books and bags in the classroom.
- Bring a buddy if you need support.
- If you are feeling anxious, let us know – you can go in first and get it over and done with.

Appendix D: Resources

Where to find out more about the school vaccine program

Department of Education and Training

Victoria's Department of Education and Training has developed an [Immunisation School Policy Advisory Guide](#) in relation to school-age children and immunisation.

Secondary School Vaccine program website

Immune Hero (Immunehero.vic.gov.au) is a one-stop-shop secondary school immunisation website for students, schools, and parents / guardians. Immune Hero hosts a range of engaging and informative videos, interactive games, lesson plans and teacher resources regarding the school based vaccine program. These resources can be utilised by schools in both the classroom and out of class time to raise awareness about the importance of immunisation.

Translated Resources

Translated information for the school vaccine program can be accessed on the [Health Translations](#) website.

Your local Immunisation provider

Your council can help you to access up-to-date information about immunisation. Contact your Council or visit Council's website.