

Secondary school immunisations

Information for parents

Secondary school students in Victoria are eligible to receive free immunisations to ensure their continued protection against preventable diseases. Immunisations are provided by local councils in cooperation with secondary schools. The purpose of this fact sheet is to advise parents about which immunisations are offered, when and why they are recommended and how they can be obtained for free.

Why are immunisations needed?

Adolescence is an important age to have a booster dose of vaccine. The protection from some immunisations given to children gradually disappears over time so needs to be boosted. The government also funds some vaccines especially for adolescents because they are at an age when the vaccine will be most effective, providing protection before they can be exposed to a disease in later adolescence or adulthood.

Immunisation is a proven and safe way to be protected against diseases which cause serious illness and sometimes death. Immunisation not only protects the person having the vaccine, but can protect other people around them who cannot be immunised due to illness or age (for example pertussis, also known as whooping cough, can be deadly for babies, however babies under six months of age are too young to be fully vaccinated).

What immunisations are offered to adolescents?

Year 7 (about 12 to 13 years old)

Hepatitis B vaccine

This vaccine is given if your child has never had a course of hepatitis B vaccine or has not finished a course previously. A course consists of two doses with four to six months between each dose.

Find out more about hepatitis B:

www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation/resources/hepatitis-b-vaccine.htm

Chickenpox (Varicella) vaccine

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

Find out more about chickenpox:

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

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine

A three dose course is given to girls only 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 adolescents may need to have two or three injections on the same day. More than one injection does not increase the chance of an adolescent 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 about diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis:

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

When are immunisations given in school?

Every year adolescents in Year 7 and Year 10 of all secondary schools in Victoria are offered the appropriate free vaccines.

Adolescents who do not attend mainstream schools are still eligible for free immunisation and should contact their GP, a medical centre or their local council immunisation service 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 immunisation. 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.

Who will give the immunisations 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 specialist immunisation nurses who give the vaccines at the school.

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 (as the vaccine is given into the upper arm.)

Authorised by the Victorian Government, Melbourne. Updated March 2012. To receive this publication in an accessible format email immunisation@health.vic.gov.au

What if my child misses their immunisation 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 attend your doctor to catch-up missed vaccine. It is important for your child to follow up with the missed vaccine as soon as practicable so they will be eligible to receive the vaccine for free. If the missed dose is part of a course of immunisations and is given soon after the missed school session then your child can usually finish the course at school with the rest of the class.

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

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

The HPV vaccine for Year 7 school girls will need to be ordered each time in advance for your daughter, so allow time for the medical centre 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 go for 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 translating and interpreting service to talk about any of this information with your local council immunisation service please call 131 450.
- The immunisation information and consent form has been translated into many languages. These can be found at www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation/factsheets/language.htm