

# Immunisation and enrolling in early childhood services

Information for parents and carers  
February 2018

## No Jab, No Play – Changes to the Victorian law

Under the 'No Jab, No Play' legislation, before enrolling a child, early childhood education and care services have to first obtain evidence that the child is up to date with all vaccinations that are due for their age, or that they are able to receive.

On 28 February 2018, the 'No Jab, No Play' legislation was amended so that an [Immunisation History Statement from the Australian Immunisation Register \(AIR\)](#) is the only form of documentation accepted for the purpose of enrolling in an early childhood education and care service.

Previous forms of documentation, for example a letter from a GP or local council, are no longer accepted.

## About required documentation

### Under 'No Jab, No Play' what documentation is required as evidence of up-to-date vaccination?

To have an [enrolment confirmed](#) for a child in long day care, kindergarten, family day care or occasional care, parents/carers have to provide the service with:

- a current Immunisation History Statement from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR); AND
- the statement must show that the child is up to date with all vaccinations that are due for their age, or that they are able to receive.

The Immunisation History Statement from the AIR lists the vaccines the child has received and, if applicable, which vaccines are due in the future and when. Medical exemption may also be listed, where applicable.

An Immunisation History Statement from the AIR is the only type of immunisation record accepted by early childhood and care services for the purposes of confirming enrolment and must be provided within the two months prior to the child starting at the service.

The Medicare logo and Australian Government crest must be present and identifiable to be considered a valid Immunisation History Statement. For example, if the statement is page two of a letter from Medicare, both pages need to be presented to the service to confirm enrolment.

### How can parents/carers get an Immunisation History Statement from the AIR?

You can print a copy of your child's Immunisation History Statement from your [myGov account](#). If you have difficulty getting a copy via your myGov account you can:

- call the AIR on phone 1800 653 809
- visit a Medicare or Centrelink office.

Families who do not hold a Medicare card must call the AIR to request an Immunisation History Statement.

A Translating and Interpreting Service is available by calling 131 450, Monday to Friday from 8:30am to 4:45pm.

### Can parents/carers provide proof of immunisations from an immunisation provider (e.g. a GP)?

No. Other forms of documentation, for example a letter from a GP or local council, are no longer accepted.

### What is considered a 'medical exemption' under 'No Jab, No Play' and what documentation is required as evidence?

Some children may be exempt from the requirement to be fully vaccinated on medical grounds. Examples of valid medical reasons that a child could not be fully vaccinated include:

- an anaphylactic reaction to a previous dose of a particular vaccine, or
- an anaphylactic reaction to any vaccine component
- has a disease which lowers immunity (such as leukaemia, cancer, HIV/AIDS, SCID), or
- is having treatment which lowers immunity (such as chemotherapy).

Parents/carers who think their child may require a medical exemption to one or more vaccines should consult their GP.

If a child has a valid medical reason they cannot be vaccinated, a GP needs to complete and sign a [Medicare Immunisation Exemption Medical Contraindication Form](#), and send it to the AIR.

The parent/carer then needs to obtain an updated [Immunisation History Statement from the AIR](#) that indicates the child is up-to-date with all the vaccines that they can have, and listed the vaccines that they cannot have due to a medical contraindication. This statement needs to be provided by the parent/carer to the early childhood service to confirm enrolment.

If parents/carers have questions or concerns about immunisation or particular vaccines, they should seek answers from a qualified source, such as a GP or local council immunisation service. The [Better Health Channel](#) also provides quality-assured information online.

### **What do parents/carers whose child's vaccinations are not up-to-date need to do to obtain acceptable documentation?**

If a child's vaccinations are not up-to-date then parents/carers should consult their GP or local council immunisation service about bringing the child's vaccinations up to date.

The GP or local council immunisation service needs to give all vaccinations that are due for their age, or that they are able to receive, and inform the AIR. The parent/carer then needs to [request an updated Immunisation History Statement from the AIR](#).

The updated Immunisation History Statement showing that vaccines are 'up-to-date' needs to be provided by the parent/carer to the early childhood service to [confirm enrolment](#).

### **How can parents/carers obtain acceptable documentation if their child was vaccinated overseas?**

Children who were vaccinated overseas must have their vaccine records assessed by a GP or local council and be offered catch-up vaccinations as required. The GP or local council will then record overseas vaccines to AIR by submitting the AIR Immunisation History form.

The AIR updates the child's records and the parents/carers can request an Immunisation History

Statement from the AIR and provide the statement to the early childhood service to confirm enrolment.

Families who experience difficulty accessing vaccinations or the required documents can seek support and guidance from the early childhood service. They may be eligible to enrol under the [Grace Period provision](#).

## **About the grace period**

### **What about vulnerable children who are behind on their vaccinations and find it difficult to access the required documentation or immunisation services?**

There are some children in the community whose families face difficulties accessing vaccinations and/or the required documentation to prove immunisation status.

Under the legislation, some families are eligible to enrol and commence at the childcare/kindergarten service, under a 'grace period' provision, while they bring their children's vaccinations up-to-date and/or obtain the required documentation.

Early childhood education and care services, with help from the Departments of Health and Human Services and Education and Training, will support families of children who are not up-to-date with their vaccinations and provide them with information as to where they can access vaccinations.

### **Who is eligible for the grace period?**

Children experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage are eligible to enrol in a service under a grace period, without having provided proof of up-to-date immunisation. The grace period provisions allow the family to continue to access early childhood education and care services while receiving information and assistance to get their child's immunisations up to date and to obtain the required Immunisation History Statement from the AIR that needs to be provided to the service.

Families who meet any of the following criteria are eligible for the grace period:

- **Evacuated children**
  - Children evacuated following emergency (such as flood or fire)
- **Children in emergency care**
  - Children in emergency care (for example, emergency foster care) under the Children, Youth and Families Act 2005

- **Children in the care of an adult who is not their parent**
  - Children in the care of an adult who is not the child's parent due to exceptional circumstances such as illness or incapacity
- **Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander children**
  - Children identified by their parents as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
- **Other children experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage**
  - Children who hold or whose parents hold a health care card, pension concession card, Veterans Affairs Gold or White card
  - Children from a multiple birth of triplets or more
  - Children who are refugees or asylum seekers
- **Children known to child protection**
  - Children who are on or who have been on a Child Protection Order
  - Children in or who have been in foster care or out-of-home care
  - Children who have a report made about them under the Children Youth and Families Act 2005
  - Families that have received support through Family Services including ChildFIRST; Services Connect; a community-based child and family service; or an integrated family service.

### How long is the grace period?

The grace period is for 16 weeks commencing from the date that the child first attends the service.

### What needs to happen during the grace period?

#### Parents/carers

During the 16 week grace period parents/carers should endeavour to have their child vaccinated if required, and/or obtain the required Immunisation History Statement from the AIR and provide it to the service.

Early childhood services can provide parents/carers with support and information to do this.

#### Early Childhood Education and Care Services

During the 16 week grace period, early childhood education and care services are required to take reasonable steps to obtain the required Immunisation History Statement from the AIR.

### When can an early childhood education and care service confirm an enrolment?

Having an application accepted or being registered on a waiting list for a place at an early childhood service is **not** a confirmed enrolment.

Confirmation of enrolment can be given by the service, no more than two months prior to the child first attending, only once the parent/carer has provided the service with:

- a current Immunisation History Statement from the AIR; AND
- the statement must show that the child is up to date with all vaccinations that are due for their age, or that they are able to receive; OR
- is eligible to enrol under the 16 week [grace period](#) while the service works with the family to obtain the necessary immunisations/documentation.

An [Immunisation History Statement from the AIR](#) is the only accepted document for proving a child's immunisation status, including that they are up to date with all vaccinations that are due for their age, or that they are able to receive, or have a [medical condition](#) that prevents them from being fully immunised for their age.

Evidence required to [qualify to enrol under the Grace Period provision](#) varies depending on the circumstances of the family. Families should discuss their individual circumstances with the service.

## About vaccination

### Why are vaccinations so important?

Vaccination is one of the most effective ways of preventing disease worldwide. Modern vaccines provide high levels of protection against an increasing number of diseases which, in some cases, can be fatal. Worldwide, it is estimated that immunisation programs prevent approximately 2.5 million deaths each year.

The current immunisation rate in Victoria for children under five years of age is around 95 per cent. This coverage rate is necessary to halt the spread of highly infectious diseases such as measles.

Immunisation not only protects those people who have been vaccinated, it also protects those in our community who may be unable to receive vaccines themselves, by reducing the prevalence and spread of disease.

## What immunisations are required for children at childcare and kindergarten?

[The immunisation schedule](#) for vaccines outlines what vaccines are available under the National Immunisation Program and when they should be received.

## Where can parents/carers go for immunisation services?

Local council immunisation services (free service), GPs and health clinics can provide immunisation services.

## Are vaccines safe?

The scientific evidence supporting vaccination is overwhelming, and the benefits far outweigh the very rare risks.

All vaccines currently available in Australia must pass stringent safety testing before being approved for use by the [Therapeutic Goods Administration](#), Australia's regulatory authority for therapeutic goods. Safety testing is required by law and is usually done over many years during the vaccine's development.

Once vaccines are in use, their safety is continually monitored by the Therapeutic Goods Administration and other organisations.

All immunisation providers play an important role in reporting adverse events following immunisation which assists in safety surveillance after a vaccine is registered for use in Australia. In Victoria the agency that receives all reports is SAEFVIC (Surveillance of Adverse Events Following Vaccination in the Community) - more information at the [SAEFVIC website](#) or 1300 882 924, option one.

## About the 'No Jab, No Play' law

### What is the objective of the 'No Jab, No Play' law?

The purpose of the No Jab, No Play law is to help increase immunisation rates for young children in the community.

The legislation is designed to:

- provide a prompt regarding immunisation for parents/carers enrolling their child in early childhood education
- allow for children of families experiencing vulnerability and disadvantage to be able to access the lifelong benefits of early childhood education and care, while being supported to obtain vaccinations and/or required evidence of vaccination.

Since the introduction of the legislation in 2016, immunisation coverage rates for young children have been steadily increasing in Victoria and are now at around 95 per cent.

### What early childhood services does the 'No Jab, No Play' law impact?

The law applies to all early childhood education and care services<sup>1</sup> in Victoria providing:

- long day care
- kindergarten (including 3 and 4 year old kindergarten)
- occasional care
- family day care.

The law does not apply to:

- enrolment in primary or secondary school (however, please note an Immunisation History Statement from the AIR does need to be provided for enrolling in primary school, however there is currently no requirement for the statement to show the child is up to date with all immunisations)
- children attending an outside school hours care service (after school care, before school care, vacation care)
- enrolments of school children in long day care, family day care or occasional care
- casual occasional care services that offer care of no more than 2 hours per day and no more than 6 hours per week (for example, crèches at gyms and shopping centres) playgroups
- services primarily providing instruction on particular activities (for example, sport, dance or music)
- services primarily provided or shared by family members of the children (and a family member is readily available and retains responsibility for the child).

### Shouldn't immunisation be a personal choice?

The legislation does not mandate vaccinations, nor does it require the administration of vaccines without consent. Parents/carers may continue to make a choice not to vaccinate their children.

Governments have a responsibility to make decisions that balance the best possible community health outcomes with individual choices. Preventing problems before they occur is vital to good health.

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<sup>1</sup> approved under the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* and licensed under the *Children's Services Act 1996*

The purpose of 'No Jab, No Play' is to increase immunisation rates in the community, particularly amongst young children. This is a public health priority, given the serious risk posed by vaccine-preventable diseases and the proven safety and efficacy of vaccines.

### Is 'homeopathic immunisation' accepted under 'No Jab, No Play'?

No. 'Homeopathic immunisation' is not a recognised form of immunisation. For more information view the [Homeopathy and Vaccination fact sheet](#) produced by the National Centre for Immunisation Research.

## Resources for parents and carers

### Access these FAQs online

<https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation/vaccination-children/no-jab-no-play/frequently-asked-questions>

### Request an Immunisation History Statement

Print a copy of your child's Immunisation History Statement from your [myGov account](#) or:

- call the AIR on phone 1800 653 809
- visit a Medicare or Centrelink office.

Families who do not hold a Medicare card must call the AIR to request an Immunisation History Statement. A Translating and Interpreting Service is available by calling 131 450, Monday to Friday from 8:30am to 4:45pm.

### Locate an immunisation provider

The Better Health Channel website has [a health service locator](#) that can assist Victorians to find their nearest immunisation provider.

### Download the VaxOnTime app

[VaxOnTime app](#)

Download the app, available for apple and android smart phones, to:

- receive reminder notifications leading up to when your child is due for their vaccinations
- search for a local immunisation provider
- call and make an appointment for vaccinations or find out when immunisation sessions are being run by your local council
- add an appointment to your device's calendar.

### More about vaccine safety

SAEFVIC (Surveillance of Adverse Events Following Vaccination in the Community) can help parents with concerns about vaccine safety – [www.saefvic.org.au](http://www.saefvic.org.au) or phone 1300 882 924, option one. Telehealth is also available with this service.

['The science of immunisation / Questions and Answers'](#) addresses six questions including 'Are vaccines safe?' and 'How are vaccines shown to be safe?'

## More information

### More about immunisation

More information for parents and carers is available on the [Better Health Channel](#).

[View the immunisation schedule](#)

### View the 'No Jab, No Play' legislation

View the legislation online [at Victorian Legislation and Parliamentary Documents](#). (Please note, due to frequent changes to this site, a direct link to the Bill cannot be provided. Go to the 'Archive' link and look under '2015' for the [Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment \(No Jab, No Play\) Bill 2015](#))

### About Commonwealth 'No Jab, No PAY' initiative

Under the Commonwealth Government No Jab No Pay law, in effect from 1 January 2016, families are no longer eligible for family assistance payments if their children (up to the age of 19) are not fully immunised or if they do not have an approved medical exemption. For information call the Families and Parent Line on 13 61 50, or [visit the website](#).

### About similar legislation in other Australian states

Similar legislation currently exists in New South Wales and Queensland.

Information regarding requirements in Queensland: <https://www.qld.gov.au/health/conditions/immunisation/childcare/index.html>

Information regarding requirements in New South Wales: [http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/pages/vaccination\\_enrolment.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/pages/vaccination_enrolment.aspx)

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