

# Victorian Pharmacist-Administered Vaccination Program expansion

Communique – March 2020

## What is changing in Victoria from 1 April 2020

- People aged 10 years and older will be able to receive their influenza vaccine from a Pharmacist Immuniser.
- People aged 15 years and older will be able to receive their meningococcal ACWY, measles-mumps-rubella and pertussis-containing vaccine from a Pharmacist Immuniser.
- Pharmacist-administered mobile or outreach vaccination services will be possible.

## Victorian Pharmacist-Administered Vaccination Program

Immunisation is one of the most effective interventions to prevent disease worldwide. Modern vaccines provide high levels of protection against an increasing number of diseases which, in some cases, can be fatal.

The Victorian Pharmacist-Administered Vaccination Program enables appropriately trained, registered pharmacists to administer influenza, pertussis (whooping cough)-containing and measles-mumps-rubella vaccines to people aged 16 years and older.

From 1 April 2020, the Victorian Government is expanding the Pharmacist-Administered Vaccination Program to allow pharmacist immunisers in Victoria to administer the:

- influenza vaccine to persons aged 10 years and older (age lowered from 16 years and older)
- meningococcal ACWY vaccine to persons aged 15 years and older; and
- measles-mumps-rubella and pertussis-containing vaccines to persons aged 15 years and older (age lowered from 16 years and older).

The restrictions on where pharmacists can administer approved vaccinations will also be expanded to include mobile and outreach services of a hospital, pharmacy or pharmacy depot (now known as Service Providers).

This change reflects the Victorian Government's commitment to increasing access to vaccination for all Victorians and ensuring that there are a range of convenient vaccination options available to protect those people most at risk of vaccine-preventable disease.

## Why we are expanding the program

Pharmacist Immunisers in Victoria play an important role in the delivery of opportunistic immunisation and improving access to vaccinations for people who are most at risk of complications from some preventable diseases. Pharmacists also play a key role in highlighting the importance of vaccination, communicating the availability of government funded vaccines and dispelling myths about the risks associated with vaccination.

Pharmacists have become an important part of the vaccination workforce in Victoria and can contribute further to state-funded vaccination programs that increase access to important and life-saving vaccines.

A recent review by the Department of Health and Human Services (the department) has considered relevant evidence and public health need to identify opportunities to expand the current program and improve Victorians' access to vaccination services.

## What these changes mean

The Secretary Approval: Pharmacist Immuniser and the Pharmacist-Administered Vaccination Program Guidelines have been updated and provide detail regarding the changed scope of the program. The below provides a summary of the changes and some of the key considerations relating to each.

### **People aged 10 years and older will be able to receive their influenza vaccine from a Pharmacist Immuniser**

On 10 October 2019, Minister Mikakos announced that Pharmacist Immunisers in Victoria will be able to administer the influenza vaccine from the beginning of the 2020 influenza season.

This will allow more family members to access their "flu shot" from their local pharmacy.

As part of the program, Pharmacist Immunisers must complete pre-vaccination screening and obtain valid consent from the individual being vaccinated and/or their parent/guardian. *The Australian Immunisation Handbook*<sup>1</sup> and the Pharmacist-Administered Vaccination Program Guidelines<sup>2</sup> includes information about consent considerations.

Processes and protocols must be in place to ensure that parent or guardian consent is obtained for all children and adolescents who are assessed as not having the capacity and sufficient maturity to understand the proposed procedure and the risks and benefits associated with it<sup>3</sup>. If a pharmacist determines that the individual does not have the maturity or understanding to receive the vaccination, and consent is not provided by a parent or guardian, they should refer the individual to their GP.

### **People aged 15 years and older will be able to receive their meningococcal ACWY, measles-mumps-rubella and pertussis-containing vaccine from a Pharmacist Immuniser**

Enabling Pharmacist Immunisers in Victoria to administer the meningococcal ACWY vaccine will increase options for adolescents who miss their meningococcal ACWY vaccination through the government funded secondary school vaccine program.

The reduction in the age of the target group for measles-mumps-rubella and pertussis-containing vaccines, and alignment with that of meningococcal ACWY, will ensure consistency in the target age group for all pharmacist administered vaccines in Victoria – with the exception of the seasonal influenza vaccine which can change annually and requires annual administration.

Prompt and accurate reporting to the Australian Immunisation Register is a requirement of the program and is vital to ensuring that people's vaccination records (that may be linked to the Family Tax Benefit) are kept up to date.

### **Pharmacist-administered mobile or outreach vaccination services will be possible**

From 1 April 2020, Pharmacist Immunisers who own, are employed or otherwise engaged by a hospital, pharmacy or pharmacy depot (Service Provider) will be able to administer approved vaccines as part of a mobile or outreach service. This change will allow Service Providers to offer vaccination services in other clinically appropriate locations/settings, increasing access to vaccination services for all Victorians.

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Immunisation Handbook, Australian Government Department of Health, available at: <https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au/vaccination-procedures/preparing-for-vaccination>

<sup>2</sup> Victorian Pharmacist-Administered Vaccination Program Guidelines, Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, available at: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation/immunisers-in-victoria/pharmacist-immunisers/guidelines>

<sup>3</sup> Australian Immunisation Handbook, Australian Government Department of Health, available at: <https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au/vaccination-procedures/preparing-for-vaccination>

Pharmacist immunisers providing vaccination services in other settings should comply with vaccination policies and procedures set by their employer, ensuring proper consideration has been given for the appropriateness of the setting to the clinical procedure undertaken and the person receiving care.

The current program requires that all Service Providers that offer vaccination services in Victoria register with the department for a government funded vaccine account. All vaccines ordered (government funded or private) need to be delivered to the address of the premises that has been registered with the department, regardless of where the vaccine may be administered.

Service Providers and Pharmacist Immunisers must continue to comply with the requirements of the Australian Guidelines for the Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare<sup>4</sup> and the National vaccine storage guidelines – Strive for 5 (current version)<sup>5</sup> which includes provisions for caring for vaccines in coolers, data loggers and cooler ice packs for mobile or outreach immunisation clinics.

Organisations in which Pharmacist Immunisers are employed or otherwise engaged to provide immunisation services are responsible for ensuring there are sufficient resources to enable safe and competent care for the consumers for whom healthcare services are provided. Information regarding clinical governance and risk management is available in the Pharmacist-Administered Vaccination Program Guidelines<sup>6</sup>.

## Your obligations as a Pharmacist Immuniser

### Training and continuing professional development

Victoria's pharmacist 'Immuniser program of study' requirements align with the National Immunisation Education Framework for Health Professionals (the National Framework)<sup>7</sup>. The National Framework incorporates the complete immunisation schedule for all age groups.

Pharmacists are expected to maintain competency through continuing professional development. For more information, please refer to the Victorian Pharmacist-Administered Vaccination Program Guidelines<sup>8</sup> on the Health.vic website.

Alternatively, for information about refresher courses you can

- [email the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia](mailto:vic.branch@psa.org.au) <vic.branch@psa.org.au>, or
- [email the Pharmacy Guild of Australia](mailto:info@vic.guild.org.au) <info@vic.guild.org.au>.

Pharmacist Immunisers should access immunisation education opportunities to support best practice and continuing professional development. This may include accessing regular updates to practice, research and publications on immunisation, such as:

- The Australian Immunisation Handbook<sup>9</sup>
- National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance website resources - [NCIRS-AIP resources](#)<sup>10</sup>
- Subscribe to the Victorian immunisation newsletter<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Australian Guidelines for Prevention and Control of Infection in Healthcare (2019), National Health and Medical Research Council, available at <https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/about-us/publications/australian-guidelines-prevention-and-control-infection-healthcare-2019>

<sup>5</sup> National Vaccine Storage Guidelines 'Strive for 5', Australian Government Department of Health, available at: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-vaccine-storage-guidelines-strive-for-5>

<sup>6</sup> Available at: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation/immunisers-in-victoria/pharmacist-immunisers/guidelines>

<sup>7</sup> Australian Immunisation Education Framework for Health Professionals, Australian Government, Department of Health, available at: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-immunisation-education-framework-for-health-professionals>

<sup>8</sup> Available at: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation/immunisers-in-victoria/pharmacist-immunisers/guidelines>

<sup>9</sup> Available at: <https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au/vaccination-procedures/preparing-for-vaccination>

<sup>10</sup> Australian Immunisation Professions Network (NCIRS – AIP), National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance, available at: <http://www.ncirs.edu.au/provider-resources/aip>

<sup>11</sup> Immunisation, Department of Health and Human Services, available at: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation>

## Reporting to the Australian Immunisation Register

Pharmacist Immunisers are required to report all vaccines administered to the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR), regardless of whether or not the vaccine is National Immunisation Program (NIP)/government funded or obtained from the private market. It is also important to ask individuals if they would like their doctor/health provider notified that they've received the vaccine. Further information about the retention of medical records can be found in the [Health Records Act 2001](#)<sup>12</sup> < >.

Ensure consent forms include a section detailing the uploading of vaccines administered to the AIR. Please see the updated Victorian Pharmacist-Administered Vaccination Program Guidelines for record keeping reference and reporting templates.

If you do not have access or have issues with accessing and recording to AIR, [email the Australian Immunisation Register](#) <air@humanservices.gov.au>.

## Providing government funded vaccines for at-risk groups

Victoria is the only state in Australia where Pharmacist Immunisers can administer government funded vaccines through the NIP. Pharmacist Immunisers should continue to order and administer government funded vaccines to those most at-risk of vaccine-preventable diseases.

From 1 April 2020, updated order forms will be available on the Health.vic website under [vaccine order forms](#)<sup>13</sup>

## Charging for vaccines

While you can choose to charge a service fee for the administration of a government funded vaccine, you are obliged to disclose before you administer the vaccine that free vaccination services are available through bulk-billing GP clinics.

You must inform the individual that the fee you're charging is for the administration of the vaccine, not the cost of the vaccine.

If the individual is not eligible for government funded vaccines, a private market vaccine may be administered.

Regulation 99(c) of the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Regulations 2017 authorises pharmacists to administer a Schedule 4 poison without an instruction from a registered medical practitioner, dentist, nurse practitioner or authorised midwife. Administration may occur provided the Secretary has approved the poison under regulation 163, and the pharmacist has taken all reasonable steps to ensure a therapeutic need exists for the poison.

## Keeping your details up-to-date

All Service Providers providing vaccination services must be registered with the department. Service Providers that have already registered with the department do not need to re-register under the expanded program.

Pharmacies registered to provide vaccination services are listed alongside a location map on the Health.vic website under [pharmacist-administered vaccination services](#)<sup>14</sup>.

If a Pharmacist Immuniser leaves your pharmacy, you need to tell the department immediately if your pharmacy no longer employs a Pharmacist Immuniser or has had a change in the nominated Pharmacist Immuniser, [email the immunisation unit](#) <immunisation@dhs.vic.gov.au> so the details can be updated.

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<sup>12</sup> Health Records Act, Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, available at: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/about/legislation/health-records-act>

<sup>13</sup> Vaccine order forms, Department of Health and Human Services, available at: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation/vaccine-order-and-stock/vaccine-order-forms>

<sup>14</sup> Available at: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation/immunisers-in-victoria/pharmacist-immunisers/vaccination-services>

## More information

### Australian Immunisation Handbook

The [Australian Immunisation Handbook](#)<sup>15</sup> is available on the Commonwealth's Department of Health website and provides a single, up-to-date clinical reference guide for health care providers administering vaccines in Australia.

### Victorian Government Department of Health and Human Services

Call 1300 882 008 or [email the immunisation unit](mailto:immunisation@dhhs.vic.gov.au) <immunisation@dhhs.vic.gov.au>.

To receive this publication in an accessible format [email the immunisation unit](mailto:immunisation@dhhs.vic.gov.au) <immunisation@dhhs.vic.gov.au>

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Available under [pharmacist immunisers](#) on Health.vic<sup>16</sup> .

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<sup>15</sup> Available at: <https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au/vaccination-procedures/preparing-for-vaccination>

<sup>16</sup> Available at: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation/immunisers-in-victoria/pharmacist-immunisers>