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| **Immunisation and enrolling in early childhood education and care services**Information for parents and carers |

**No Jab, No Play**

Under the ‘No Jab, No Play’ legislation, before enrolling your child into an early childhood education and care service, you must provide evidence that your child is up to date with immunisation for their age.

An [Immunisation History Statement from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR)](#AIRcert) is the only form of documentation accepted for the purpose of enrolling in an early childhood education and care service.

After enrolment, you need to continue to supply up to date Immunisation History Statements to your child’s early childhood education and care service.

## 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 your child in long day care, kindergarten (3 and 4 year old kindergarten), family day care or occasional care (early childhood education and care services), you must 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 there is a valid [immunisation medical exemption](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/im011) <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/im011> to a vaccine.

The Immunisation History Statement from the AIR lists the vaccines your child has received and, if applicable, which vaccines are due in the future and when. Immunisation 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 education and care services for the purposes of confirming enrolment. The statement must be provided by the AIR within the two months prior to your 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 obtain a copy of your child’s Immunisation History Statement from your [myGov account](https://my.gov.au/LoginServices/main/login?execution=e1s1) <https://login.my.gov.au/las/mygov-login?execution=e1s1> or the Express Plus Medicare app. If you have difficulty getting a copy via your myGov account or the app you can:

* call the AIR on 1800 653 809
* visit a Medicare or Centrelink office.
* ask your immunisation provider to print Immunisation History Statements for you

Refer to: [How to get immunisation history statements](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/how-to-get-immunisation-history-statements?context=22436) <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/how-to-get-immunisation-history-statements?context=22436>.

**How can parents/carers who are not eligible for Medicare get an Immunisation History Statement from the AIR?**

If you are not eligible to hold a Medicare card, you can ask your immunisation provider to print an Immunisation History Statement or you can call the AIR to request an Immunisation History Statement be posted (allow up to two weeks for delivery by post).

**Can parents/carers** **provide other 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 not acceptable for the purposes of enrolment in an early childhood education and care service.

**What is considered an 'immunisation 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, or
* has a disease which lowers immunity (such as leukaemia, cancer, HIV/AIDS, SCID), or
* is having treatment which lowers immunity (such as chemotherapy).

If you have a child that may require an immunisation medical exemption to one or more vaccines, you should consult your GP. A GP will need to complete and sign an [immunisation medical exemption form](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/im011) AIR Immunisation Medical Exemption Form <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/im011> and send it to the AIR.

You will then need to obtain an updated Immunisation History Statement from the AIR that indicates your child is up to date with all the vaccines that they can have and lists the vaccines that they cannot have due to a medical contraindication. This statement needs to be provided to the early childhood education and care service to confirm enrolment.

If you have questions or concerns about immunisation or particular vaccines, you should seek answers from a qualified immunisation source, such as a GP or local council immunisation service. The [Better Health Channel](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/immunisation-childhood) <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/immunisation-childhood> also provides information online.

#### What do parents/carers whose child's vaccinations are not up to date need to do to obtain an Immunisation History Statement?

If your child's vaccinations are not up to date, you should consult your GP or local council immunisation service to arrange catch-up vaccination.

The GP or local council immunisation service need to give your child all vaccinations that are due for their age, or that they are able to receive, and inform the AIR. You will then need 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 to the early childhood education and care 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 recognised immunisation provider. The immunisation provider may offer vaccination through a ‘catch-up schedule’ as required and report vaccines to the AIR.

You can request an Immunisation History Statement from the AIR. This statement must then be provided to the early childhood education and care service to confirm enrolment.

Families who experience difficulty accessing vaccinations or the required documents can seek support and guidance from the early childhood education and care service. You may be eligible to enrol under the Support Period provision (see below for details of the support period provision).

## About the support period

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

Some children are eligible to enrol and commence at the early childhood education and care services, under a 'support period' provision. During the support period, you are encouraged to bring your children's vaccinations up to date and/or obtain the required documentation.

If your child is not up to date with their vaccinations and is eligible for the support period (see eligibility below), early childhood education and care services should support you by providing information about where you can access vaccinations.

#### Who is eligible for the support period?

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

* **Evacuated children**
  + - * 1. Children evacuated following emergency (such as flood or fire)
* **Children in emergency care**
  + - * 1. 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**
  + - * 1. 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**
  + - * 1. Children identified by their parents as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander
* **Other children experiencing vulnerability or disadvantage**
  + - * 1. Children who hold or whose parents hold a health care card, pension concession card, Veterans Affairs Gold or White card
        2. Children from a multiple birth of triplets or more
        3. Children who are refugees or asylum seekers
* **Children known to child protection services**
  + - * 1. Children who are on or who have been on a Child Protection Order
        2. Children in or who have been in foster care or out-of-home care
        3. Children who have a report made about them under the Children Youth and Families Act 2005
        4. Families that have received support through [Family services](https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/family-services) <https://providers.dffh.vic.gov.au/family-services> including ChildFIRST; Services Connect; a community-based child and family service; or an integrated family service.

Evidence required to qualify to enrol under the Support Period varies depending on the circumstances of the family. Families should discuss their individual circumstances with the service.

**How long is the support period?**

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

**What needs to happen during the support period?**

During the 16 week support period you should have your child vaccinated if required, and/or obtain the required Immunisation History Statement from the AIR and provide it to the service.

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

## 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 education and care 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 support period while the service works with the family to obtain the necessary immunisations/documentation; OR
* has an immunisation medical [exemption](#medexemp) that prevents them from being fully immunised for their age.

## Immunisation after enrolment

Under Victorian law, parents/carers are required to continue to provide early childhood education and care services with evidence that their enrolled child is up to date with their immunisations.

You will need to provide your child’s service with a new Immunisation History Statement whenever your child receives (or was due to receive) immunisation/s after enrolment.

**Why is this required?**

If there is a disease outbreak at the service, accurate and current evidence of immunisation is needed to identify children at risk (for example, children too young to be fully immunised against a disease) who may need to stay away from the service until it is safe for them to return.

The Victorian Government introduced this requirement to provide an important additional prompt to parents/carers regarding immunisation as part of a continued effort to improve and maintain high childhood immunisation rates and protect the community from vaccine-preventable diseases.

**What does the early childhood education and care service do?**

The service will regularly request that parents/carers ensure that immunisation evidence is up to date at the service throughout the time your child is enrolled. Services review the immunisation evidence you provide to make sure it meets the requirements of the legislation and keep it on file with the child’s enrolment records.

**What do parents/carers do?**

If your child has received a vaccine while they are attending an early childhood education and care service, you should obtain an updated Immunisation History Statement from the AIR and provide it to your child’s service.

If you receive a request from the service to ensure that the service has the latest evidence of up to date immunisation, and you know that the service already has the most up to date Immunisation History Statement, you do not need to provide another copy.

## 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 early childhood education and care services?**

The immunisation schedule for vaccines outlines what vaccines are available under the [National Immunisation Program](https://www.health.gov.au/topics/immunisation/when-to-get-vaccinated/national-immunisation-program-schedule) (NIP) <https://www.health.gov.au/topics/immunisation/when-to-get-vaccinated/national-immunisation-program-schedule> and when they should be received.

All vaccines listed in the NIP Schedule are free. Eligibility for free vaccines under the NIP is linked to [eligibility for Medicare benefits](https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/enrolling-medicare?context=60092) <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/enrolling-medicare?context=60092>.

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

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

**Are vaccines safe?**

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

All vaccines currently available in Australia must pass stringent safety testing before being approved for use by the [Therapeutic Goods Administration](https://www.tga.gov.au/) <https://www.tga.gov.au/>, 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 is available at the [SAEFVIC website](https://www.saefvic.org.au/Info/About) <https://www.saefvic.org.au/Info/About> or via 1300 882 924, option one.

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

**What is the objective of the ‘No Jab, No Play’ legislation?**

The purpose of the No Jab, No Play legislation 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 and care service
* 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.

‘Conscientious objection’ to vaccines is not an exemption under the legislation.

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 education and care services does the ‘No Jab, No Play’ legislation impact?**

The legislation applies to all early childhood education and care services[[1]](#footnote-2) in Victoria providing:

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

The legislation 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, shopping centres and 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. You may continue to make a choice not to vaccinate your 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.

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](https://ncirs.org.au/ncirs-fact-sheets-faqs/homeopathy-and-vaccination) <https://ncirs.org.au/ncirs-fact-sheets-faqs/homeopathy-and-vaccination> produced by the National Centre for Immunisation Research.

## Resources for parents and carers

#### Access these FAQs online

[No Jab, No Play - frequently asked questions](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/publications/no-jab-no-play-frequently-asked-questions) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/publications/no-jab-no-play-frequently-asked-questions>

Additional support can be located through [Services and contacts for ‘No Jab, No Play’](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation/services-and-contacts-for-no-jab-no-play) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation/services-and-contacts-for-no-jab-no-play>

#### 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. Telehealth is also available with this service.

‘[The science of immunisation / Questions and Answers’](https://www.science.org.au/learning/general-audience/science-booklets/science-immunisation) <https://www.science.org.au/learning/general-audience/science-booklets/science-immunisation> addresses six questions including *‘Are vaccines safe?* and *How are vaccines shown to be safe?*

## More information

#### More about immunisation

[Better Health Channel](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/campaigns/no-jab-no-play/) <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/campaigns/no-jab-no-play/>.

[Childhood immunisation - Better Health Channel](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/immunisation-childhood) <https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/healthyliving/immunisation-childhood>

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

View the No Jab, No Play legislation online at [Public Health and Wellbeing Amendment (No Jab, No Play) Act 2015](https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/as-made/acts/public-health-and-wellbeing-amendment-no-jab-no-play-act-2015) <https://www.legislation.vic.gov.au/as-made/acts/public-health-and-wellbeing-amendment-no-jab-no-play-act-2015>.

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

Under the Commonwealth Government No Jab No Pay law, in effect from 1 January 2016, parent/carers 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 Parentline on 13 61 50, or visit  [[Parentline](https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/parentline)](https://www.health.gov.au/topics/immunisation/when-to-get-vaccinated/immunisations-for-access-to-family-assistance-benefits-and-early-childhood-services) <https://services.dffh.vic.gov.au/parentline>.

#### About similar legislation in other Australian states

Similar legislation currently exists in other states, which is displayed on the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance webpage - [No Jab No Play, No Jab No Pay](https://ncirs.org.au/public/no-jab-no-play-no-jab-no-pay) <https://ncirs.org.au/public/no-jab-no-play-no-jab-no-pay>.

To receive this publication in an accessible format, phone 1300 882 008, using the National Relay Service 13 36 77 if required, or email [immunisation@health.vic.gov.au](mailto:immunisation@health.vic.gov.au)

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1. approved under the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010* and licensed under the *Children’s Services Act 1996* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)