



Immunisation

December 2018

Immunisation is a simple, safe and effective way of protecting children against some infections which can cause serious illnesses and sometimes death. Immunisation not only protects individuals, it also protects other vulnerable people in the community by reducing the spread of infection. If children are protected, they will not be able to pass the infection on to other people, especially very young babies who are not yet fully immunised.

Some of the infections/diseases that can be successfully prevented include;

- > Hepatitis B
- > Some forms of bacterial pneumonia
- > Some forms of bacterial meningitis
- > Meningococcal septicaemia
- > Measles
- > Mumps
- > Rubella
- > Poliomyelitis
- > Tetanus
- > Whooping cough
- > Rotavirus gastroenteritis

Many of these diseases are now rarely seen in Australia because of the successful immunisation program.

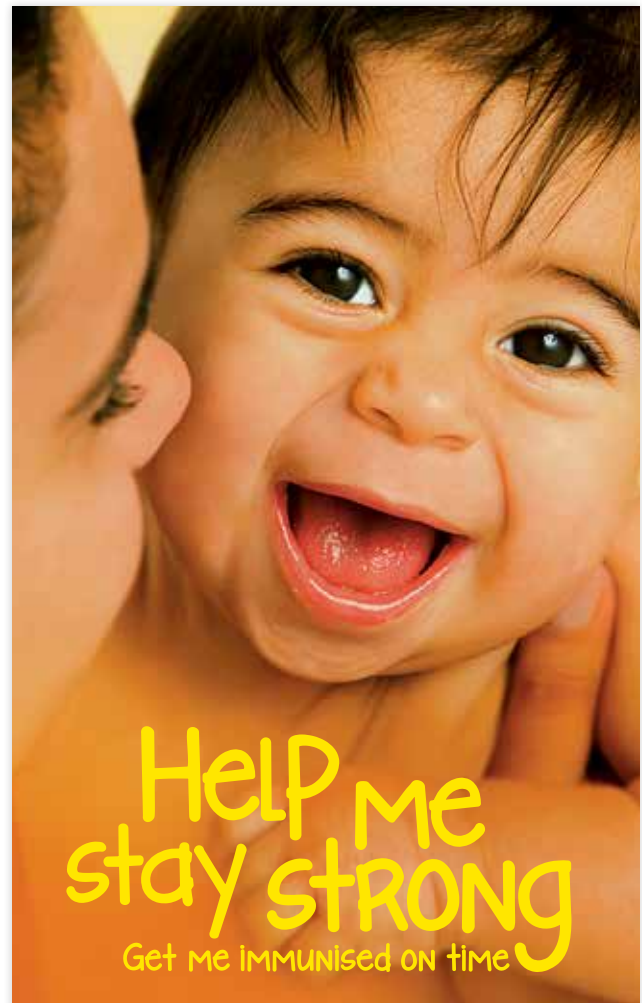
Aboriginal children should receive all the routine vaccines given to other children. In addition, to provide extra protection, Aboriginal children are also offered Hepatitis A vaccine and a pneumococcal vaccine which covers more bacterial strains.

There are several recognised barriers that Aboriginal families may face getting their children immunised, these can include;

- > A complex immunisation schedule that changes frequently.
- > Different schedule for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.
- > Difficulty getting to a GP to have immunisations and the costs that may be involved if the GP does not bulk-bill.
- > Alternative immunisation providers are different across different areas/regions.
- > Parental or carers' concerns regarding the safety of the vaccines (there are good sources of information available to help answer parents' questions).

The Australian Immunisation Register is a national register that records vaccinations given to people of all ages in Australia. It also provides immunisation history statements to parents or guardians. Parents and families do not need to do anything to add their children on to the Immunisation Register. Children who are under seven years of age and enrolled in Medicare are automatically included or they will be added once their immunisation details from a doctor or immunisation provider are sent in.

If a child has not been immunised or has missed a vaccination, it is easy to catch up. A doctor or other health staff member will be able to check the register and work out an appropriate individual catch-up program.



Health messages

- > Getting bub immunised right from the start will help them stay strong.
- > The protection from some vaccines given to babies fades over time – boosters are required to maintain the high levels of protection needed to prevent diseases.
- > Breastfeeding also provides bub with short term protection from illness and disease – but immunisation is required for long term protection.
- > Babies need help to fight diseases, the earlier we can protect them with vaccines the safer they will be.
- > Immunisations protects bub, families and communities.
- > Being immunised is much safer than having the disease.
- > Your local Aboriginal Health Service, Aboriginal Health Practitioner, nurse or GP can help with organising and providing immunisations for babies and children.
- > There are many resources available and people to talk with to help answer questions about immunisation safety.

Examples of practical actions

- > Be familiar with the current immunisation schedule for Aboriginal children – this updates regularly but can be easily accessed on government websites¹.
- > Know where to find information about the benefits of immunisation and answers to common questions/concerns. Have this information available to give to parents.
- > Display posters and other information relevant to immunisation.
- > The immunisation section of SA Health Communicable Disease Control Branch has the 'Help Me Stay Strong' program with associated materials².
- > Organise an 'Immunisation Day' or 'Well Health Check Day' in partnership with your local Aboriginal Health Service.
- > Provide parents with information about the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register³.



1 SA Health. Aboriginal immunisation recommendations <https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/health+topics/health+conditions+prevention+and+treatment/immunisation/aboriginal+immunisation+recommendations/aboriginal+immunisation+recommendations>

2 SA Health. Help Me Stay Strong <https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/health+topics/health+conditions+prevention+and+treatment/immunisation/aboriginal+immunisation+recommendations/help+me+stay+strong>

3 Department of Human Services. Australian Immunisation Register. <https://www.humanservices.gov.au/individuals/services/medicare/australian-immunisation-register>

For more information

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