



message stick

National Indigenous Immunisation message stick (NIIMS) October 2015

A vaccine preventable diseases newsletter for health
services



Vaccination plays a very important role in protecting Indigenous communities from vaccine preventable diseases. The more our mob gets immunised the less our babies, kids, youth, parents and elders get sick.



Update on Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Immunisations

A number of immunisation programs are available for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. These programs provide protection against some of the most harmful infectious diseases that cause severe illness and deaths in our communities.

Immunisations are provided for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander folk in the following age groups:

- Children aged 0-5 years
- Children aged 10-15 years
- People aged 15+ years
- People aged 50+ years

Free vaccinations under the National Immunisation Program can be accessed through community controlled Aboriginal Medical Services (AMS), local health services or general practitioners and school programs. Influenza vaccination is also recommended but not funded for 5-14 years.

Children aged 0-5 years

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 0-five should receive the routine vaccines given to other children. In addition, children aged 0-five of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent can receive the following additional vaccines funded under the National Immunisation Program:



Pneumococcal disease

An additional booster dose of pneumococcal vaccine is required between the ages of 12 and 18 months. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children living in Queensland, the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia continue to be at risk of [pneumococcal](#) disease for a longer period than other children.

This program does not apply to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children living in New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania or the Australian Capital Territory, where the rate of pneumococcal disease is similar to that of non-Indigenous children.

Hepatitis A

This vaccination is given because [hepatitis A](#) is more common among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children living in Queensland, the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia than it is among other children. Two doses of vaccine are given six months apart starting over the age of 12 months.

The age at which hepatitis A and pneumococcal vaccines are given varies among the four states and territories.

Influenza (flu)

From 2015, the flu vaccine will be provided free for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged six months to five years is available under the National Immunisation Program. The flu shot will protect your children against the latest seasonal flu virus.

Some children over the age of five years with other medical conditions should also have the flu shot to reduce their risk of developing severe influenza.

Children aged 10 - 15

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 10-15 should receive the following routine vaccines given to other children aged 10-15:

- Varicella (chickenpox)
- Human papillomavirus (HPV)
- Diphtheria, tetanus and acellular pertussis (whooping cough) (dTpa)

People aged 15+

Pneumococcal disease

Pneumococcal vaccines are free for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples from 50 years of age, as well as those aged 15 to 49 years who are at high risk of invasive pneumococcal disease.

Influenza (Flu)

Due to disease burden [influenza](#) vaccines are free for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged six months to five years old, 15 years old or over and all those with medical risk factors. The flu shot will protect you against the latest seasonal flu virus.



No Jab, No Pay

The Australian Government's No Jab, No Pay measure will commence from January 1 2016 (Subject to the passage of legislation). From January, families will no longer be 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.

The Government will provide additional information on the catch-up schedule for affected children closer to the program's commencement date. In the meantime, the broad arrangements for catch-up vaccinations have now been agreed as follows:

- For children under the age 10, catch-up can be provided free under the current arrangements of the National Immunisation Program.
- For those aged 10 to 19 years, the commonwealth will purchase the required vaccine and use existing state and territory delivery systems to provide vaccines direct to providers. This time limited program (1 January 2016 to 31 December 2017) will provide free vaccines to families who currently receive family assistance payments, who do not have a valid medical exemption, and now wish to immunise their children in order to continue to receive these payments.

More information is available on the Immunise Australia Website at:

www.immunise.health.gov.au



If you have an issue that you would like to raise about immunisation and Indigenous people, email brendon.kelaher@health.nsw.gov.au

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