

Sharp and to the Point

In this issue

- [School Immunisation Program \(SIP\)](#)
- [Aboriginal Immunisation Data](#)
- [Cold Chain Management](#)
- [Immunisation Education](#)
- [NCIRS Social Science Unit reference group](#)
- [Vaccinology Conference 2022](#)
- [Q & A](#)
- [COVID-19 Update](#)
- [Japanese Encephalitis Virus \(JEV\)](#)
- [Yellow fever providers](#)
- [Monkeypox \(mpox\)](#)
- [Around the world](#)
- [Christmas message to Immunisation Providers](#)
- [What's on the Noticeboard](#)

This newsletter is produced by the Immunisation Section of the Communicable Disease Control Branch, SA Health. If you have any feedback, comments, suggestions of what you would like to see in future editions, please email healthimmunisation@sa.gov.au



School Immunisation Program (SIP)

With the 2022 SIP almost completed we are gearing up for a busy 2023 with students in years 7, 8 and 10 being offered vaccines under this program. In 2024 we will revert back to two year levels; year 7 and year 10.

The 2023 SIP resources have been delivered to providers in early December to enable distribution to the schools prior to the end of 2022.

There is a combined year 7/8 consent card in 2023 and SA Health are working closely with the Department for Education, Association of Independent Schools SA and Catholic Education SA to have completed consents returned to providers in 'class groups' and 'year levels'.

Parents will require clear direction from the schools about the importance of completing the class name on the consent cards which will indicate the year level.

SIP providers are encouraged to contact the Immunisation Section if they require any assistance with the 2023 program.



[^ Back to top](#)

Aboriginal Immunisation Data

South Australian Immunisation Rates: Mar-Jun 2022, processed 30 September 2022

The Aboriginal immunisation coverage rates for SA have increased across all cohorts over the past quarter, after decreasing in the March quarter. The gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal children reduced in the 12-month and 24-month cohorts. The 5-year-old coverage rates for Aboriginal children increased this quarter to again be higher than non-Aboriginal children.

Please continue to check the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) for all children presenting to your practice to identify any overdue for routine immunisations.

Resources promoting Aboriginal childhood immunisations are available to order through the resources section on the SA Health website in the [Immunisation for Health Professionals](#) section.

Table: Quarterly immunisation coverage rates as published by the AIR Sept 30 2022*

| | | Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) children | All children | Coverage Gap |
|----------------|----------|--|---|-------------------------------|
| 12 month old's | SA | 92.2% (↑1.12% from last quarter) | 94.8% (↑0.1% from last quarter) | -2.6% (last quarter -3.6%) |
| | National | 91.4% (↑0.6% from last quarter) | 93.8% (↓0.2% from last quarter) | -2.4% (last quarter -3.2%) |
| 24 month old's | SA | 91% (↑2.2% from last quarter) | 92.1% (↓0.6% from last quarter) | -1.1% (last quarter -3.8%) |
| | National | 88.5% (↓0.1% from last quarter) | 92.2% (↓0.3% from last quarter) | -3.7% (last quarter -3.9%) |
| 60 month old's | SA | 97.6% (↑2.7% from last quarter) | 95% (↓0.7% from last quarter) | +2.6% (last quarter -0.7%) |
| | National | 96.1% (↑1.1% from last quarter) | 94.1% (nil change from last quarter) | +2% (last quarter +1.4%) |

*Please note we have changed the data reported on in this article from rolling annualised data, to quarterly data, comparing the most recent quarterly data with data from the preceding quarter. For annualised immunisation rates see coverage data tables at health.gov.au

[^ Back to top](#)

Cold Chain Management

All funded vaccines stored by SA immunisation providers, must be stored in compliance with the VDC requirements, that support the national guidelines, which include storage in a Vaccine Purpose Built fridge and having a data logger. Please see the [National Vaccine Storage Guidelines 'Strive for 5'](#).

On the purchase of a new fridge or whenever a technician has been required to check the vaccine fridge due to a cold chain breach, a 48 hr data logger reading can be emailed to the Immunisation Section for approval before you receive further vaccine orders.

TagAlert Monitors

The TagAlert is a digital single use monitor that is included in all non-refrigerated vaccine deliveries (Coolpac shipper or Polystyrene Esky). An alarm is triggered if a heat or freeze breach occurs during transport.

On delivery check the TagAlert by pressing the blue STOP button for 5 seconds:

- > If the screen displays an arrow to the tick (✓), no alarms have been triggered during transit and the vaccines should immediately be stored in the vaccine fridge
- OR
- > If the screen displays an arrow to the cross (X) and a number 1, 2, 3 and/or 4 immediately place and isolate the vaccines within your vaccine fridge and contact the Immunisation Section on 1300 232 272 for further direction.

[^ Back to top](#)

Immunisation Education

Are you interested in learning more about immunisation?

The HESA accredited *Understanding Vaccines and the National Immunisation Program* is available to support your learning and to gain CPD points. For more information please access SA Health [website](#).



[^ Back to top](#)

NCIRS Social Science Unit reference group

Expressions of interest are now open for the NCIRS Social Science Unit reference group

Are you a healthcare provider (nurse, Pharmacist, GP) who is interested in giving input and advice into the development of immunisation resources and initiatives? Information about the reference group and what would be involved is available [here](#).

[^ Back to top](#)

Vaccinology Conference 2022

The 2022 Vaccinology Conference was held on 4 November at the Adelaide Convention Centre.

Over 300 health professionals attended on the day and more than 100 joined online to hear presenters from throughout Australia and a guest speaker from New Zealand. The theme of the 2022 conference was Immunisation Access & Equity. Some of the key messages from the presentations included the following.



Session 3: Access to vaccination in remote areas- an equity question. Equity is not the same as equality and some communities require additional assistance and support. Vaccine programs particularly in Indigenous communities requires community consultation and time should be allowed to bring everyone on board.

Session 3: *Adolescent/ School Programs*. Teenagers are important champions of vaccines for the future. For them to become adults supportive of immunisation programs it is important their adolescent immunisation experiences are positive.

Session 3: *Snapshots-Vaccinating our Vulnerable Community*. A key message was that relationships that have been built with vulnerable communities in COVID-19 pandemic should not be lost, as these relationships are very important for future vaccine programs. Effective strategies to address vaccine hesitancy can be found [here](#).

[^ Back to top](#)



Q & A

Test your knowledge

Q. If a child has recently had chicken pox disease what is the interval required before having the varicella vaccine.

A. Four-week interval. The rationale for delaying the delivery of the live varicella vaccine is to reduce likelihood of the response to the natural infection interfering with the replication of the live virus in the MMRV vaccine and subsequent immune response to vaccine components. Based on the advice provided in the Australian Immunisation Handbook, of a 4-week interval between live vaccines (if not given simultaneously), this would be an appropriate minimum interval between natural varicella infection and administration of MMRV.



Previous infection is not considered to being a contraindication to vaccination. There is no known increase in adverse events from vaccinating those with pre-existing immunity to one or more of the vaccine components.

Q. Can a patient who is currently taking antivirals receive Zostavax?

Systemic (but not topical) antiviral agents may decrease the effectiveness of Zostavax. When possible, antivirals (e.g. acyclovir) should be stopped at least 48 hours before vaccination and withheld for at least 14 days. ([NCIRS fact Sheet](#))

The Australian Immunisation Handbook lists the '[Precautions to the use of Zostavax](#)' which includes recommendations for people receiving antiviral medicines.

[^ Back to top](#)

COVID-19 Update

Are your patients travelling overseas?

Many people have contacted SA Health stating they have missing vaccination details on the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR). People travelling overseas may require proof of vaccination, particularly for COVID-19 vaccines. SA Health is promoting social media messaging to highlight that Immunisation History Statements should be checked and downloaded **well in advance** of any overseas travel.

Individuals with any missing records are to be directed to contact the vaccination provider who administered the vaccine. This may be a GP, pharmacy or council clinic, who will need to update the AIR with the missing or incorrect details.

For COVID-19 vaccines administered through an SA Health site in metropolitan or regional centres as part of the pandemic response, see [Immunisation records and registers | SA Health](#) for more information.

COVID-19 Vaccine decision-making tools

COVID-19 vaccine decision-making tools are now available in five new languages: Arabic, Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese, and Greek. The tools can be accessed online and viewed on any device.



There are two decision aids available:

- 1) for [adults and adolescents](#) aged 16 years and over
- 2) for [parents of children](#) aged 5 to 15 years.

Through five simple steps, the COVID-19 vaccine decision aids offer information about SARS-CoV-2 and the available COVID-19 vaccines to help people weigh up the risks and benefits of COVID-19 vaccination for themselves and their children.

COVID-19 Emergency Directions changed

All Directions regarding mandatory COVID-19 vaccine in a work setting, that continued under *Part 11A of the SA Public Health Act 2011*, have now expired and are no longer in force.

As such a Chief Public Health Officer COVID-19 medical vaccine exemption is currently only required if a person is an employee or potential employee at a SA Health work setting. The current SA Health Policy - [Addressing vaccine preventable disease: Occupational assessment, screening, and vaccination](#) came into effect on the 18 November 2022.

A person who requires a COVID-19 medical vaccine exemption to continue working in another work setting other than SA Health may apply through Medicare and their GP.

Further information on the Medicare immunisation exemption application process can be found [here](#).

[^ Back to top](#)

Japanese Encephalitis Virus (JEV)

In mid-October the Minister approved Phase 2 of the JEV immunisation program enabling residents in [eligible postcodes](#) around the River Murray and the lower lakes who spend more than 4 hours a day outdoors most days to receive a funded JEV vaccine. This is also available for those working in the eligible postcodes who spend at least 4 hours a day outdoors most days as part of their job. SA Health will be reviewing these criteria over coming weeks, taking into account vaccine uptake and risks related to flooding. Those eligible through Phase 1 remain eligible.

The Riverland Mallee Coorong Local Health Network (LHN) with help from the Barossa Hills Fleurieu LHN, as well as participating GPs, pharmacies and the City of Onkaparinga immunisation clinic are offering funded JEV vaccines to eligible persons. Demand for these vaccines has been high with over 10,000 people vaccinated to date.

JEV vaccines:

- > Imojev is a live vaccine and is the primary vaccine for this program, requiring only 1 dose. Imojev is available at the SA Health clinics and through participating pharmacies for those aged 5 years and over.
- > JEspect is the inactivated vaccine for people who are pregnant, breastfeeding or [immunocompromised](#) and is only available through participating GPs, and currently via the City of Onkaparinga immunisation clinics.

Children less than 5 years of age need to be vaccinated at a participating GP, or currently at the City of Onkaparinga immunisation clinic.

For up-to-date information on JEV and the immunisation program please see resources below:

[Sahealth.sa.gov.au/JEVvaccine](https://sahealth.sa.gov.au/JEVvaccine)

[Sahealth.sa.gov.au/JEVhealthprofessionals](https://sahealth.sa.gov.au/JEVhealthprofessionals)

[ATAGI clinical guidance on Japanese encephalitis virus vaccines](#)

JEV online learning resource through [NCIRS](#)

[Australian Immunisation Handbook - JEV](#)

[Fight the Bite](#)

[^ Back to top](#)

Yellow fever providers

With international travel on the increase, yellow fever vaccine providers are reminded that it is an Australian Government Department of Health requirement that all medical and nurse practitioners who prescribe yellow fever vaccine complete the online [Yellow Fever Vaccination Course](#) every three years.



A copy of the certificate of completion must be emailed to the immunisation section Healthimmunisation@sa.gov.au.

All providers must be familiar with the [National Guidelines for Yellow Fever Vaccination Centres and Providers](#)

Medical facilities that would like to become an approved yellow fever vaccination centre must complete the [Yellow Fever Vaccination Centre application package](#).

For further information on the disease and vaccine requirements please see the Department of Health and Aged Care [Yellow fever general fact sheet](#).

[^ Back to top](#)

Monkeypox (mpox)



Following a series of consultations with global experts, WHO will begin using a new preferred term “mpox” as a synonym for monkeypox. Both names will be used simultaneously for one year while “monkeypox” is phased out.

Information about mpox in Australia is available [here](#)

Mpox is vaccine-preventable; however, the supply of vaccines against mpox both globally and in Australia is currently restricted.

Limited supplies of mpox vaccine are available in SA for those that meet the current eligibility criteria. More information on mpox vaccine including eligibility and how to access the vaccine can be found on the [SA Health](#), [SHINE SA](#) and [Adelaide Sexual Health Centre](#) websites.

[^ Back to top](#)



Around the world

Following resurgence of polio disease, global leaders have recently confirmed US\$ 2.6 billion in funding toward the Global Polio Eradication Initiative's (GPEI) [2022-2026 Strategy](#) to end polio. More information can be viewed in the [WHO article](#).

[^ Back to top](#)

Christmas message to Immunisation Providers



Time flies, and we've already reached the conclusion of the year. The Immunisation Section team want to express our gratitude for your hard work in immunising people in South Australia. We hope you all have a wonderful holiday season with your family and friends. May this Christmas end 2022 on a cheerful note and make way for a fresh and bright New Year. Here's wishing you all a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

[^ Back to top](#)

What's on the noticeboard



The following websites and links have the latest immunisation news and information to help immunisation providers keep up to date with the latest!

SA Health

- > [Immunisation for Health Professionals](#)
- > [Subscribe to receive Immunisation Section updates](#)

The Department of Health - Australian Government - Immunisation

- > [Immunisation for Health Professionals](#)
- > [News and media](#)

The National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS)

- > [News and events](#)
- > [Subscribe to the Australian Immunisation Professionals Network](#)

News items from overseas

- > **UK** - [Public Health England - Vaccine Update](#)
- > **USA** - [Centres for Disease Control and Prevention - Vaccines and Immunizations](#)
- > **Canada** - [Immunisation and vaccines](#)
- > **New Zealand** - [Immunisation Advisory Centre](#)

[^ Back to top](#)



For more information

Immunisation Section
Communicable Disease Control Branch
SA Health
1300 232 272

www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/immunisationprovider

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