

Coronavirus (COVID-19) update

Victorian Pharmacist Immunisers Immunisation Services

Dated: 26 March 2020.

The following recommendations have been produced by the Department of Health and Human Services to support Pharmacist Immunisers providing immunisation services to their community.

The current threat of coronavirus (COVID-19) to public health is unprecedented. We therefore must all take steps to minimise the risk of transmission to staff and clients attending community immunisation services. This document recommends procedures, based on current advice, to minimise the risk Pharmacist Immunisers will have to consider in their operational processes based on staffing levels, venues and client numbers.

This situation is changing rapidly, and all information related to COVID-19 is being updated at <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>

Scope

Pharmacist immunisers are to be connected to a pharmacy, pharmacy depot or hospital (Service Provider) that has registered with the department to provide a vaccination service and hold a government-funded vaccine account. This means that they must either own (for example, the pharmacist owner of a pharmacy), be employed or otherwise engaged by that Service Provider.

Community-based services

Community-based services can include but are not limited to:

- Pharmacies, hospitals, pharmacy depot services
- mobile and outreach services of a hospital, pharmacy or pharmacy depot.

Pharmacist Immuniser services include from 1 April 2020:

- influenza vaccine to persons aged 10 years and older
- meningococcal ACWY vaccine to persons aged 15 years and older; and
- measles-mumps-rubella to persons aged 15 years and older
- pertussis-containing vaccines to persons aged 15 years and older.

Recommendations for venues

It is recommended that signage be displayed at the entrances of all community immunisation sessions. Such signage should include the following information:

- Due to the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the pharmacy is taking measures to protect the community. It is vital that their instructions are followed.
- Only one parent/guardian should accompany a child for vaccination.
- People should not attend for vaccination if they or their child have symptoms of a respiratory infection (such as fever, or a sore throat, or a runny nose, or shortness of breath or a cough) or have returned from overseas in the past 14 days.
- Wash hands or use hand sanitiser provided at the entrance to the reception or waiting area.

Consideration should be given to the translation of all signage and messaging into other key community languages.

Social distancing

In addition to existing professional guidelines or pharmacy procedures, pharmacists administering vaccines may consider the following:

- Minimising time spent in enclosed consultation room/area by conducting pre-screening assessments at another area in the pharmacy where a 1.5m distance can be maintained.
- Scheduling appointments with sufficient time in between to allow for cleaning and disinfecting of any surfaces (e.g. benches, chair, door handle).
- Allocate a waiting area/s for the 15 minute observation period that allows for social distancing of at least 1.5m, and no more than 1 person per 4m².
- Pharmacist Immunisers may need to consider the adequacy of the spacing in their setting and may need to move vaccination services to larger spaced community venues.
- Arrange client seating and queueing for administration so that there is 1.5 metres between clients.
- Limit the vaccine process to one adult with the child being vaccinated (unless there are extenuating circumstances).
- Consider a separate room for clients to wait post vaccination dependant on numbers at each session.
- If numerous clients arrive and there is not enough seating, a staff member should be available to monitor queueing, and maintain the order and flow of clients into the administration area.
- Minimise physical contact with client record documents.

Vaccine preparation

- Do not needle or prepare large quantities of vaccine in case of low attendance.
- Provide adequate disinfection - ensure either hand sanitisers or detergent and paper towels for hand washing with running water available between clients.
- Use alcohol-based disinfectant for cleaning surfaces regularly.
- Disinfectant product must be available at both the administration and clinical area.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- PPE additional to that normally used as part of your routine immunisation service is not recommended. PPE is only necessary for health care workers seeing patients with symptoms consistent with coronavirus (COVID-19), where there is a much higher risk of transmission. The emphasis instead should be on hand and respiratory hygiene, social distancing allowing at least 1.5m between people, and exclusion from the work setting when unwell or required to be in self-isolation or quarantine. More advice can be found on the department's [coronavirus website](#) and in the guide for health services and GPs located on that site.

Immunisation checklists

- Use a single page pre-immunisation checklist for each client rather than a laminated version.

Longer immunisation sessions

- Consider longer immunisation sessions to implement procedures to protect staff and the community against the transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19).

Communication

- Pharmacist Immunisers should ensure that immunisation webpages, telephone messages and venue signage is update regularly with coronavirus (COVID-19) information to ensure clients are aware of the expectations and changes that the pharmacy has made to the service.

Staff absenteeism

- Pharmacist Immunisers and support staff must not attend an immunisation service if unwell.
- Staff with risk factors for coronavirus (COVID-19) and/or are unwell must not come to work until they have been assessed by a medical practitioner as being clear. This will involve having a medical assessment and a swab test for coronavirus (COVID-19) which must be negative.
- If a member of staff is a health care worker and is a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19), they must not return to work until they have been assessed by a medical practitioner as fully recovered and have returned a negative coronavirus (COVID-19) virus test
- If there are staff shortages, Pharmacist Immunisers will need to determine if an immunisation service can be undertaken safely.

Cancellation of community immunisation

- Ensure signage is displayed prominently at the venue if services are cancelled
- Provide a website or phone contact for the next available vaccination service
- Pharmacies using an appointment-based service may consider using SMS and social media to notify clients of any changes to service provision.

Further information and resources

For additional resources including translated materials and access to updated information about coronavirus (COVID-19), please go to <https://www.dhhs.vic.gov.au/coronavirus>

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