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| Victorian Pharmacist-Administered Vaccination Program Expansion - Communique |
| May 2022 |
| OFFICIAL |

# What is changing in Victoria from 19 May 2022

Pharmacist immunisers in Victoria are authorised to administer approved vaccines through Secretary Approvals made under the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Regulations* 2017.

Following a review of relevant evidence and clinical safety and a targeted consultation process, the Secretary Approval: Pharmacist Immuniser (the Secretary Approval) has been amended authorise pharmacist immunisers to administer the:

* influenza vaccine to people aged five years and older (age lowered from 10 years and older).
* Japanese encephalitis (JE) vaccine to people aged five years and older who are recommended for vaccination as listed on the Victorian Department of Health’s Japanese encephalitis in Victoria website: <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/infectious-diseases/information-for-health-professionals-japanese-encephalitis-in-victoria>. Successful completion of a JE eLearning module is required prior to administration of the JE vaccine.

The amended Secretary Approval was gazetted on 19 May 2022 and came into force on the date of gazettal.

The Victorian Pharmacist-Administered Vaccination Program Guidelines (the Guidelines), which detail the program requirements, have also been updated to reflect the expansion.

The Secretary Approval and the Guidelines can be accessed from the Department of Health’s Pharmacist Immuniser webpage: <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation/pharmacist-immunisers>.

# Administering the influenza vaccine to people aged five years and older

The Immuniser program of study includes administration of all vaccines listed on the National Immunisation Program to all age groups, including childhood immunisation. Pharmacist immunisers in Victoria are also administering the COVID-19 vaccine to children aged five years and over.

Allowing pharmacist immunisers to administer the influenza vaccine to children aged five years and over means that more members of the family can receive the influenza vaccine from their local pharmacy. It also allows children to receive their influenza vaccine at the same time as a COVID-19 vaccine, in order to stay well this winter.

Pharmacist immunisers have a professional responsibility to ensure they are appropriately trained and competent and are meeting best practice for vaccinating children aged five years and over. This includes identification and management of adverse events following immunisation for this age group. Pharmacist immunisers should also ensure that vaccine recall systems are in place and that their premises offers a safe and suitable vaccination environment for administration of vaccines to young children.

In recognition of the additional clinical and communication skills required to administer vaccines to younger children, it is **strongly recommended** that pharmacist immunisers view the Melbourne Vaccine Education Centre (MVEC) *Immunising Children and Infants webinar* which was developed for workforces administering the COVID-19 vaccine to children aged five and over. This is available free of charge from the MVEC website at: <https://education-mvec.mcri.edu.au/>

The Pharmacy Guild of Australia and the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia have also developed additional training modules and refresher training for pharmacist immunisers who may wish to support their competency and currency of practice administering vaccines to this younger age group.

These include a module on childhood immunisation: <https://www.guild.org.au/news-events/news/nsw/childhood-immunisation-module-now-available>

and refresher training on the administration of vaccinations for young children: [https://my.psa.org.au/s/training-plan/a110o00000AiR6L/immunisation-online-refresher-course](https://urldefense.com/v3/__https:/my.psa.org.au/s/training-plan/a110o00000AiR6L/immunisation-online-refresher-course__;!!C5rN6bSF!H1iX1s2czLdq2C1GpJyoC3Gr9dV__fiyb7l2szM1XXZ28LUMdt_6QF55UJ1ZAvA3RBTFYTTc_X6v8W-vODAaJXRXx3R915k$)

# Administering the JE vaccine to people recommended for vaccination

In March 2022, the Commonwealth declared the JE virus a Communicable Disease Incident of National Significance. A vaccination management plan was announced that included the purchase of JE vaccines and provision of them free of charge to at-risk individuals recommended for vaccination.

A comprehensive whole of government response to the JE virus is also underway in Victoria. As part of this work, consideration has been given to the workforces that are authorised to administer the JE vaccine and the workforces that may be needed if Victoria is required to quickly scale up, escalate and adapt to changing circumstances in the future.

Authorising pharmacist immunisers and nurse immunisers to administer the JE vaccine to people aged five years and over who are recommended for vaccination will increase access and ease pressure on regional GPs in JE virus-affected areas. Pharmacist immunisers who are administering the JE vaccine to eligible individuals in Victoria must first complete the Japanese encephalitis eLearning module that has been approved by the Deputy Chief Health Officer – Communicable Disease. The module is currently being finalised and is expected to be made available shortly. Pharmacist immunisers will be able to access the module free from: <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation/immunisers-in-victoria/pharmacist-immunisers/pharmacist-immuniser-study-programs>.

Administration of the JE vaccine is limited to those individuals that are recommended for vaccination and eligible to receive a government funded JE vaccine. Pharmacist immunisers should undertake an assessment of eligibility for any person who presents to the pharmacy for vaccination or presents a prescription for the JE vaccine. Pharmacist immunisers can supply and administer the vaccine at no cost[[1]](#footnote-2) only to those individuals that meet the eligibility requirements. This will ensure that the limited supply of JE vaccine is accessible and available to people in our community who are most at risk of JE infection. Pharmacist immunisers will need to consider whether there are identified cohorts within the community that may be eligible for vaccination and to confirm if these individuals wish to access the vaccine before JE vaccine is ordered. This will minimise wastage due to expired unused stock.

The list of people recommended for vaccination is available on the Victorian Department of Health’s Japanese encephalitis in Victoria website: <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/infectious-diseases/information-for-health-professionals-japanese-encephalitis-in-victoria>

This list may be updated from time to time in response to changing circumstances, so pharmacist immunisers are required to check this list to confirm an individual’s eligibility prior to administering the vaccine.

People who do not meet the eligibility criteria for the JE vaccine may present to pharmacies seeking the vaccine. In such cases, immunisation providers should carefully understand the purpose of the request and seek to educate the person about the eligibility criteria for vaccination.

If people do not meet the eligibility criteria and are concerned about possible infection, they may be referred to a General Practitioner (GP) to discuss if JE vaccination is appropriate.

An information sheet has been developed for JE vaccine providers. This includes information about the JE vaccine, vaccine transport, storage and handling and vaccine ordering and supply: <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2022-04/Japanese-Encephalitis-Serology-Vaccine-Information-for-Immunisation-Providers-V3-4-pdf.pdf>

# More information

### Australian Immunisation Handbook

The [Australian Immunisation Handbook](https://betahealth.govcms.gov.au/news-and-events/news/the-digital-australian-immunisation-handbook)[[2]](#footnote-3) is available on the Commonwealth’s Department of Health website and provides a single, up-to-date clinical reference guide for health care providers administering vaccines in Australia.

### Victorian Government Department of Health

If you have any queries about this matter please email the Immunisation Unit [Immunisation@health.vic.gov.au](mailto:Immunisation@health.vic.gov.au)

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| To receive this document in another format email the Immunisation Unit [immunisation@health.vic.gov.au](mailto:immunisation@health.vic.gov.au)  Authorised and published by the Victorian Government, 1 Treasury Place, Melbourne.  © State of Victoria, Australia, Department of Health, May 2022.  Available at [Pharmacist immunisers](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation/pharmacist-immunisers) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation/pharmacist-immunisers> |

1. While the JE vaccine is provided at no cost, pharmacist immunisers may wish to charge a service fee for administration of the vaccine. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Available at: <https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au/vaccination-procedures/preparing-for-vaccination> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)