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| Approval to administer the monkeypox vaccine: nurse immunisers and pharmacist immunisers |
| October 2022 |
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# Background

Since May 2022, there has been a global increase in monkeypox infections in multiple countries where the illness is not usually seen. Monkeypox was first reported in Australia in May 2022 and declared by the World Health Organization as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on 23 July 2022. On 28 July 2022, Australia’s Chief Medical Officer declared monkeypox a Communicable Disease of National Significance[[1]](#footnote-2).

A comprehensive whole of government response to the monkeypox virus is currently underway in Victoria which includes distribution of the monkeypox vaccine through select sexual health centres, health services and Local Public Health Units.

As part of this work, consideration has been given to the workforces that may be required to support the administration of the monkeypox vaccine to people recommended for vaccination.

# Authorisations

Nurse immunisers have been authorised to administer the monkeypox vaccine to people recommended for vaccination as listed on the Victorian Department of Health’s (the department’s) Monkeypox webpage[[2]](#footnote-3). Authorisation of nurse immunisers will build workforce capacity in the existing monkeypox vaccine models and allow them to scale up as more monkeypox vaccine becomes available.

Pharmacist immunisers have also been authorised to administer the monkeypox vaccine to people recommended for vaccination, aged five years and older. Authorisation and training of pharmacist immunisers will ensure that Victoria is prepared and well positioned when more vaccine becomes available and it is determined that additional models of care involving partnerships with primary care partners (including community pharmacies) need to be established, or in case of an expansion to the groups recommended for vaccination.

The amended Secretary Approvals for nurse immunisers and pharmacist immunisers have been published in Special Gazette No. 518, Monday 3 October 2022, available at: <<http://www.gazette.vic.gov.au/gazette/Gazettes2022/GG2022S518.pdf>>. Please see pages 1-3 for nurse immunisers and pages 4-8 for pharmacist immunisers.

Compliance with the *Victorian monkeypox vaccination program guidelines*[[3]](#footnote-4), available at: <<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/infectious-diseases/monkeypox>>, is a condition of the Secretary Approvals when administering the monkeypox vaccine to people recommended for vaccination.

The list of persons may be updated from time to time in response to changing circumstances, so immunisers are required to be aware of the priority target groups recommended for vaccination. **Please note** that individuals requesting the monkeypox vaccine can self-identify that they meet the current eligibility criteria. They do not need to identify which criteria they meet, nor provide any proof of eligibility. The website is available at: <<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/infectious-diseases/monkeypox>>.

The Approved Client Groups for Nurse Immunisers document has also been updated and can been accessed from: <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation/nurse-immunisers-approved-client-groups>.

# Training requirements

Nurse immunisers and pharmacist immunisers who are administering the monkeypox vaccine to eligible individuals in Victoria must first complete the monkeypox eLearning module that has been approved by the Deputy Chief Health Officer – Communicable Disease. This training takes approximately 30 minutes to complete and can be accessed free from: <<https://www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation/programs-of-study>>. Completion of this training is a condition of Secretary Approvals.

The training includes information on the JYNNEOS® vaccine, as the preferred monkeypox vaccine in Victoria, and therefore immunisers only have the required knowledge, skills and training within their individual scope to administer the JYNNEOS® vaccine, without instruction from an authorised prescriber. Patients requiring ACAM2000™ vaccine should be referred to a medical practitioner or nurse practitioner for vaccination assessment and administration.

Standard administration of JYNNEOS® vaccine is by subcutaneous injection however, JYNNEOS® vaccine may also be administered via the intradermal route to people without immunocompromise. This technique must only be used by trained and competent immunisers to minimise inadvertent underdosing, leakage or subcutaneous injection.

An *Intradermal injection skills and competencies checklist* has been developed as a guide to verify that immunisers are deemed clinically skilled and competent in the technique of intradermal injection. This checklist must be completed and issued by an appropriately experienced clinician (for example, a medical practitioner, nurse practitioner or other specialist clinician) proficient in intradermal injection technique who can oversee the assessment of the clinical skills and competencies of an immuniser.  The checklist is available within the *Victorian monkeypox vaccination program guidelines[[4]](#footnote-5)*.

The training will not equip nurse immunisers or pharmacist immunisers to provide all the necessary care in the instances of post exposure prophylaxis purposes for high-risk close contacts of monkeypox cases. This process requires specialist counselling and comprehensive public health measures to be considered – including contact tracing. For more information about post-exposure prophylaxis, refer to the Victorian monkeypox vaccination program guidelines.

# More information

### Australian Immunisation Handbook

The [Australian Immunisation Handbook](https://betahealth.govcms.gov.au/news-and-events/news/the-digital-australian-immunisation-handbook)[[5]](#footnote-6) 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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1. [Monkeypox (MPX) | Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care](https://www.health.gov.au/diseases/monkeypox-mpx) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/infectious-diseases/monkeypox> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Victorian monkeypox vaccination program guidelines, available at <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/infectious-diseases/monkeypox>. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Available from: <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/infectious-diseases/monkeypox> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Available at: <https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au/vaccination-procedures/preparing-for-vaccination> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)