



Australian Government

Department of Health

CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

IMPORTANT INFORMATION - *No Jab, No Pay* - New Immunisation Requirements for Family Assistance Payments

From 1 January 2016:

- only parents of children (less than 20 years of age), who are fully immunised, or are on a recognised immunisation catch-up schedule, or have an approved medical exemption can receive the Child Care Benefit, the Child Care Rebate and the Family Tax Benefit Part A end of year Supplement (family assistance payments) – that is, vaccination objection or conscientious objection to vaccination will no longer be a valid exemption.
- the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR) will be expanded to record immunisations for all children less than 20 years of age.

Dear Colleague

As a part of the Government's commitment to improving immunisation coverage in Australia, the *No Jab, No Pay* measure will commence on 1 January 2016.

Only parents of children (less than 20 years), who are fully immunised, or are on a recognised immunisation catch-up schedule or have an approved medical exemption, can receive the family assistance payments. Conscientious objection and vaccination objection on non-medical grounds will no longer be a valid exemption from immunisation requirements. The relevant vaccinations are those under the National Immunisation Program (NIP) childhood schedule, which covers vaccines normally administered by age five. These vaccinations must be recorded on the ACIR.

Parents will be notified by Centrelink that they may not meet the immunisation requirements for family assistance payments, and will be encouraged to speak with their vaccination provider about updating their child's vaccination records or commencing an appropriate vaccination catch-up schedule.

Vaccination catch-up arrangements

Information on the vaccination catch-up arrangements for children, how to plan catch-up vaccinations, changes to the ACIR, and your reporting obligations is provided in the enclosed fact sheet: *No Jab, No Pay - New Immunisation Requirements for Family Assistance Payments*.

In summary, from 1 January 2016, all states and territories will supply free NIP vaccines to vaccination providers for all children less than 10 years of age that require vaccination catch-up. Children less than 10 years of age who are overdue for vaccines on the NIP should be commenced on a catch-up schedule.

Parents of young people aged 10 to 19 years of age who wish to immunise their children in order to continue to receive family assistance payments will have access to free catch-up vaccines for a time limited period (1 January 2016 - 31 December 2017). These vaccines will be available through the current ordering systems in your state or territory. The Commonwealth is currently in negotiations to procure the additional vaccines for this age cohort, and will advise of the vaccine brands funded prior to the commencement of the program via the Immunise Australia website (www.immunise.health.gov.au).

From 1 January 2016, vaccination providers must submit details to ACIR of all vaccines given to those people less than 20 years of age.

From September 2016, the ACIR will be further expanded to become the Australian Immunisation Register capturing all vaccinations from birth to death given in GP and community clinics.

Information on the staged approach to the register expansion is available in the Fact Sheet -

UPDATE: Expansion of Australia's Immunisation Registers available at:

www.immunise.health.gov.au

Valid medical exemptions

From 1 January 2016, notifications of medical contraindications and natural immunity will NOT be accepted on practice/GP letterhead and must be provided on the approved *ACIR Immunisation Medical Exemption* form. The *ACIR Immunisation Medical Exemption* form has recently been updated to include guidance for GPs on what is, and is not, considered a valid medical contraindication to immunisation and to include a section to notify a natural immunity. This form can only be completed by GPs. Old versions of this form signed after 1 January 2016 will not be accepted.

Medical contraindications to vaccination are rare. The medical basis for vaccine exemption is based on guidance in the *Australian Immunisation Handbook* (10th edition, updated 2015 online). A comprehensive list of false contraindications to vaccination can also be found in the Handbook.

Natural immunity to hepatitis B, measles, mumps, rubella and varicella must be confirmed via laboratory testing or a physician-based clinical diagnosis. Exemption to a combination vaccine on the basis of natural immunity is only valid if immunity is confirmed for all vaccine antigens.

Vaccine hesitant parents/carers

Some parents/carers may have concerns or questions about immunisation. To assist these conversations, I would like to refer you to *Myths and Realities: Responding to arguments against vaccination* booklet which is available at www.immunise.health.gov.au. Additionally, the Department of Health has commissioned the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS) to develop five new factsheets to help frame discussions about immunisation with parents and provides evidence-based answers to commonly held concerns and myths surrounding immunisation. The following factsheets are also available at www.immunise.health.gov.au.

- How are vaccines shown to be safe?
- How do vaccines affect immunity?
- What about autism?
- What is in a vaccine?
- Why is the schedule the way it is?

Parents and carers who have questions about immunisation requirements and family assistance payments can also be encouraged to visit www.humanservices.gov.au/families

Please share this information with others in your practice (including locums) who administer or prescribe vaccines.

Yours sincerely



Professor Chris Baggoley