

Immunisation

Playgroup Victoria's Statement

Playgroup Victoria supports the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia's recommendations that all children should be immunised, unless there is a clear medical reason why this should not occur. Playgroups are not legislated in relation to this.

From the 1st of January 2016 the Victoria State Government enforced legislation, preventing unvaccinated children from attending childcare and kindergarten (unless there is a substantiated medical reason as why they are not). The Australian Federal Government has enforced changes to the provision of family benefits for families who do not immunise their children. These announcements do not impact community-based playgroups, because playgroup enrolments are not legislated and do not relate to rebate benefits. Decisions about immunising a child are wholly the responsibility of the parent or guardian.



Information for Playgroups and Playgroup Leaders

Playgroups are about families working together for the safety and wellbeing of all parents, caregivers and children. Playgroup Victoria encourages playgroups to adopt policies that welcome and include all families, as well as ensuring the health and safety for families attending playgroup. Playgroup children are aged between 0-5, as such there will be children attending playgroup that have not yet begun their vaccination schedule. Parents need to take precautions when taking very young babies to playgroup before the immunisation schedule begins.

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Playgroup committees should draw up guidelines outlining the procedures to follow should there be an outbreak of a communicable disease, this includes those where vaccines are available and those not. Clearly state what the exclusion period is for the sick child and their siblings who may be in the incubation stage.

Please keep in mind that in the circumstance where one sibling is home from school, kindergarten or playgroup sick with a communicable disease, it is advised that their siblings do not attend playgroup. Families are under no obligation to give this information. If this information is collected, privacy laws require you to state why it is being collected, who has access to this information, how it will be stored and how it will be used.

If playgroups ask the immunisation status of children on their enrolment form they need to state that giving the information is optional.



“Excluding a child on the basis of immunisation status will not always lead to a complaint of discrimination. A discrimination complaint could only be raised where the reason for not being vaccinated relates to a personal characteristic protected by the Act. For example, where a religion prohibits vaccination, or where a disability prevents a child from receiving a vaccination. If the reason behind not being vaccinated is personal choice, then a complaint of discrimination could not be made as ‘personal choice’ is not protected by the Act.”

Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission

In the Event of an Infectious Disease Outbreak

In the event of an infectious disease outbreak, unimmunised children may contract the disease and contribute to its spread. For the protection of their own health and the health of other children, it is recommended that these children not attend playgroup during this time. Children under six months and pregnant women may also be at increased risk in these circumstances and families should consider their attendance during this time.

For further information on immunisation contact the Department of Health

Email: immunisation@health.vic.gov.au

www.health.vic.gov.au/public-health/immunisation

