Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Health**

Adolescent Immunisation
protection for everybody

Guide for parents
Adolescent vaccination – Year 7

Key points:

- Vaccination protects your adolescent and community from serious diseases.
- Most adolescents experience little or no discomfort from vaccinations.
- Your GP or pharmacist may also be able to vaccinate your child. If you prefer this option, please let our nurses know by selecting the 'Decline' option when you fill out the form.

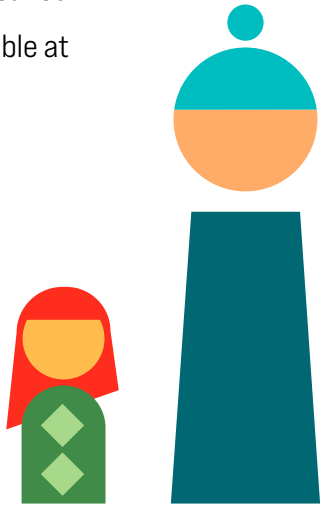
Vaccinations offered in high school

In Year 7, your adolescent will be offered free, routine vaccinations to protect them against vaccine-preventable diseases.

A nursing team, certified in vaccination, will visit your adolescent's school to offer:

- **Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (whooping cough)** – (one injection) boosts immunity from a similar vaccination usually received during early childhood
- **Human papillomavirus (HPV)** – (one injection) protects against some strains of HPV and related types of cancer.

Further information is available at healthywa.wa.gov.au/adolescentimmunisation



More about diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis and HPV vaccinations

Diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis (dTpa) vaccination

The dTpa vaccination is a 3-in-1 injection that helps protect against 3 potentially serious diseases – diphtheria, tetanus and pertussis (whooping cough). Getting this vaccination in high school helps to maintain effective immunity into adulthood. This vaccination protects adolescents and the broader community from diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough, and particularly vulnerable people such as babies by helping to stop the spread of these diseases.

Diphtheria is a contagious and potentially life threatening bacterial infection causing difficulty breathing, heart failure and nerve damage. It is spread by breathing in the bacteria after an infected person coughs or sneezes.

Tetanus is not spread from person to person, rather it is a bacterial infection that can enter the body from an injury caused by a break in the skin. It can cause painful muscle spasms and heart failure.

Whooping cough is a potentially life-threatening bacterial infection that attacks the airways causing uncontrollable coughing and difficulty breathing. Like diphtheria, it is spread by breathing in the bacteria after an infected person coughs or sneezes.

Fully vaccinated adolescents will be protected for many years but may require a booster dose in the future for protection against pertussis or if an injury places them at risk of tetanus.

Human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination

This HPV vaccination is equally important for all adolescents to protect against the risk of HPV virus infection that can lead to certain types of cancers. HPV is a common virus and up to 90 per cent of people who are sexually active will be infected at some point. Usually, your body clears the infection and there are no symptoms. However, some types of HPV can stay in the body for a long time, and cause cancers of the anus, vagina, cervix, mouth and throat. Almost all anal and cervical cancers are linked to HPV infection.

The HPV vaccine is over 85 per cent effective in preventing the main types of HPV infection causing cancers and genital warts. It is most effective when offered **before** your adolescent participates in any sexual activity.

What you need to do

Complete the intent form (consent or decline)

Your adolescent cannot be vaccinated at school without your consent. Whether you consent or decline, it is important to complete the form ahead of the nursing team's visit. Only a parent or legal guardian can give consent or decline vaccination for an adolescent.

The form can be completed:

- **Online** (preferred method) – health.wa.gov.au/adolescentconsent
- **Hard copy** – If you are unable to complete the online form, download a copy from healthywa.wa.gov.au/adolescentimmunisation and return the completed form to the school.

Note: If your adolescent attends a school on **Cocos Islands** or **Christmas Island**, complete and return the paper form provided by the school.

If your dependent is an **adolescent under the care of the Department of Communities**, contact your dependent's case worker to complete a form and return it to their school.

What to expect

When will the nursing team visit my adolescent's high school?

The nursing teams visit high schools across WA throughout the year. Your school will let you know before vaccination day via the school's preferred communication method. If you're unsure, check with the school.

How to prepare your adolescent for vaccination

While the vaccination itself is very quick, the anticipation may cause stress for some students.

Nursing teams work extensively with high school students and are skilled at making sure your adolescent is informed, comfortable and cared for. However, there are simple things you can do to make sure your adolescent is prepared:

- Talk to your adolescent about how they are feeling about vaccination and let them know what to expect.
- Share with your adolescent why vaccination is important: it helps to protect them and others in the community who may be more vulnerable to disease.
- Discuss with your adolescent the diseases they'll be protected against by receiving the vaccinations.
- Reassure with facts.
- Make sure your adolescent eats their regular meals and has water to remain hydrated.

Before your adolescent is vaccinated

Let the nursing team know if your adolescent:

- has had a severe reaction following any past vaccination
- has a history of severe allergy where vaccination is not recommended
- has had a live vaccine within the last month. For example, tuberculosis, measles, yellow fever
- has had an injection of immunoglobulin or whole blood transfusion in the last 3 months
- has a disease that lowers immunity (for example, leukaemia, cancer, HIV/AIDS) or is having treatment which lowers immunity (for example, steroid drugs such as hydrocortisone or prednisolone, radiotherapy, chemotherapy).
- lives with someone who has a disease that lowers immunity or who is having treatment that lowers immunity.

If your adolescent is unwell or misses vaccination day

In most cases, if your adolescent has a mild, common illness, such as a cold with a low-grade fever, they can still be safely vaccinated.

On the day, the nursing team will assess your adolescent before giving the vaccination. If for any reason they decide your adolescent shouldn't be vaccinated, they will bring home information with further advice.

It is recommended your adolescent is vaccinated as close as possible to the recommended age, however if your child does miss their vaccination at school there are options to catch up. You can visit any participating:

- pharmacy
- general practice
- community immunisation clinic
- Aboriginal Medical Service.

Note: While the vaccination is free, some providers may charge for consultations.

After vaccination

Students are required to sit and stay at the place of vaccination for at least 15 minutes to check they doing well. After school, make sure they feel well and talk to them about the experience. Your adolescent will be given an aftercare card and you can ask them to share it with you. You may receive an SMS from WA Health a few days after vaccination to help monitor side effects.

Vaccinations, like any other medicines, can cause side effects. Most side effects are usually mild and short lasting and do not need treatment. Most people experience few to no side effects and serious side effects are very rare. Common reactions may include pain, redness and swelling at the injection site, fever, irritability, drowsiness, decreased appetite, headaches, rash and nausea.

Serious vaccination reactions are possible, but rare. Learn more at healthywa.wa.gov.au/adolescentimmunisation

Paracetamol can help reduce mild fever or pain and a cool damp cloth can help with pain at the injection site.

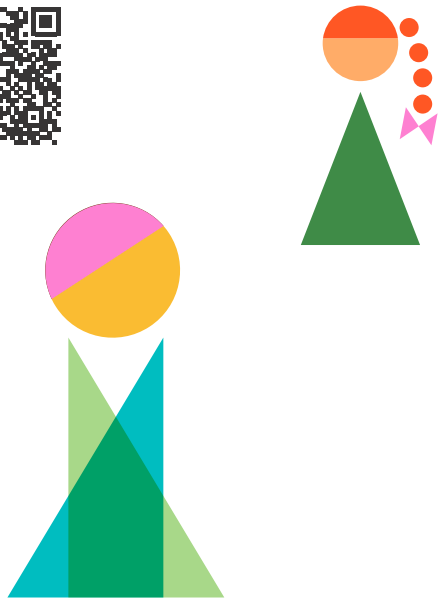
Seek medical advice or go to the local emergency department if your adolescent has any side effects that may be serious or unexpected such as swelling of the face or throat or difficulty breathing. You can also call *Healthdirect Australia* on 1800 022 222 for non-urgent queries. You can report concerns about any serious reactions after vaccination – visit healthywa.wa.gov.au/reportingsideeffects or call 6456 0208.

More information

For health advice or vaccination outside of school, speak with your GP, pharmacist, community health centre or Aboriginal Medical Service.

This document is available in various languages and can be made available in alternative formats on request.

For more information about adolescent immunisation or for help completing the intent form scan the QR code or go to healthywa.wa.gov.au/adolescentimmunisation



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