



Vaccine Update 500- Recent history of vaccine policies and programs in Western Australia

12/08/2026

History of Vaccine Updates

Welcome to the milestone 500th edition of Vaccine Update.

The Vaccine Updates electronic newsletter was introduced in August 2011 by the Immunisation Program in the Western Australia (WA) Department of Health (DoH) as a means to update immunisation providers on program changes and alerts in a timely manner. It has now grown from an ad hoc newsletter to a weekly update with a current subscription of 7,000 providers, with the largest proportion from general practice.

Thank you for being part of this journey as we celebrate it's 500th edition and reflect on major vaccine policy and programs that have been implemented since the first edition.

Key milestones for WA Health

- WA was one of the first states in Australia to launch a maternal pertussis vaccination program in March 2015.
- WA was the first state in Australia to launch childhood and adolescent meningococcal ACWY (MenACWY) vaccination programs in December 2016.
- WA was the first state to launch an influenza vaccination program for primary school-aged children in March 2020.
- The first COVID-19 vaccine administered in WA occurred on 22 February 2021.
- WA was the first state in Australia to launch an RSV immunisation program for infants in April 2024.

WA Immunisation Schedule

There have been many changes to the [WA Immunisation Schedule](#) since the first Vaccine Update, in which the schedule offered vaccination against 15 vaccine preventable diseases (VPDs). The current 2026 schedule offers vaccination against 18 VPDs, providing higher protection for the WA community.

In addition to the WA Immunisation Schedule, WA DoH first published the [WA Aboriginal Immunisation Schedule](#) in May 2024 to provide clear guidance on vaccines funded for WA's Aboriginal community .

Vaccine distribution

The last decade has seen a significant increase in the number of vaccines distributed by DoH. Since 2015, there has been a:

- 79% increase in number of immunisation providers who receive government-funded vaccines throughout the state
- 65% increase in number of vaccine orders placed
- 63% increase in number of vaccines distributed across the state
- 90% increase in the total value of vaccines distributed across the state

In 2025, the total value of vaccines distributed was over \$70 million. The responsibility to ensure the safe storage and use of these vaccines is on everyone who handles the vaccines. For information on cold chain management, see here: [Cold chain management](#).

WA Immunisation Strategy

In 2013, the first comprehensive statewide strategy was published to provide clear direction for immunisation stakeholders on how to optimise immunisation service delivery across the State. In 2025, the third strategy - [Western Australian Immunisation Strategy 2024–2028](#) - was published. The overarching vision of this current strategy is ***for every individual, in every community, at every stage of life, to confidently engage with immunisation, supporting robust health for all Western Australians.***

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The Aboriginal Immunisation Network Steering Committee (AINSC) meets quarterly to discuss key immunisation challenges and opportunities affecting Aboriginal communities across Western Australia. The Committee has provided valuable strategic advice and guidance to inform the development of the Aboriginal Immunisation Implementation Guideline, which will support implementation of the Western Australian Immunisation Strategy 2024-2028 and help ensure that Aboriginal priorities, perspectives and needs are reflected across the WA health system.

Vaccine safety surveillance

When the first Vaccine Update was sent out, the [WA Vaccine Safety Surveillance \(WAVSS\)](#) system was newly established to detect rare, late onset or unexpected events that may not have been identified during clinical trials.

Key developments in vaccine safety surveillance in WA include:

- 2014: [SmartVax](#) was introduced for active surveillance via SMS to vaccine recipients. This is now operating across 106 sites in WA
- 2017: mandatory reporting for medical and nurse practitioners of adverse events following immunisation was introduced under the *Public Health Act 2016* and the *Public Health Regulations 2017*
- 2019: WAVSS moved to the reporting portal www.safevac.org.au, enabling any member of the public to report an adverse event.
- 2021: data linkage case finding was introduced to identify potential adverse events resulting in emergency department presentation or hospital admission.

WAVSS process includes clinical review of reported potential adverse events and offers options for referral to specialist immunisation clinics to maintain confidence in further vaccination after experiencing an adverse event.

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Australian Childhood Immunisation Register expanded into Australian Immunisation Register in 2016

In September 2016, the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR) expanded to an all of life register and became known as the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR). AIR provides Australians with easily accessible, complete immunisation histories, and is used by Commonwealth and State governments to help make decisions about immunisation programs.

Key developments in vaccine administration reporting include:

- 2021: legislative change to the *Australian Immunisation Register Act 2015* mandated vaccination providers to report administration of National Immunisation Program (NIP), influenza, and COVID-19 vaccines to the AIR
- 2025: AIR introduced an antenatal indicator for vaccines given to people during pregnancy.
- 2026: AIR introduced annual due and overdue rules for those eligible for influenza vaccines under the NIP.

Resources about mandatory reporting of vaccine administration can be found here:

[Immunisation provider information and resources](#)

Immunisation legislation introduced for children in 2019

In July 2019, amendments to the *Public Health Act 2016* and the *School Education Act 1999* came into effect. Known as 'No Jab No Play' (NJNP), the legislation aimed to increase childhood vaccination rates in WA and protect the community from vaccine preventable diseases.

[No Jab No Play](#) policy requires children to be up to date with their immunisations according to their *Australian Immunisation Register* (AIR) history statement to enrol into long day care, family day care, pre-kindergarten, or kindergarten.

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WA DoH is supporting the implementation of NJNP by:

- developing the [Western Australian Immunisation Requirements Guidelines](#) for persons in charge of child care services, community kindergartens and schools
- delivering NJNP database training to support Public Health Units in providing efficient follow-ups for exempt children
- Developing a survey to ascertain school staff level of understanding of the NJNP legislation and their responsibilities. This will form a baseline knowledge indicator that can be used for future targeted messaging to school staff.

Establishment of the Aboriginal Immunisation Network Steering Committee in 2019

The Aboriginal Immunisation Network Steering Committee (AINSC) was established in 2019 to provide cultural governance and culturally informed advice to the Communicable Disease Control Directorate (CDCD). The Committee supports efforts to improve Aboriginal immunisation rates across WA through a coordinated, system-wide approach.

AINSC meets quarterly to discuss key immunisation challenges facing the WA Aboriginal community. This committee has provided significant important input to the current development of the Aboriginal Immunisation Implementation Guideline.

COVID-19 vaccination

Since the first COVID-19 was administered in WA on 22 February 2021, over 8.2 million COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered across the state.

From 1 October 2026, COVID-19 vaccination in Australia will transition from the current [National COVID-19 Vaccination Program \(NCVP\)](#) to ongoing delivery under the National Immunisation Program (NIP). This transition will support the long-term sustainable approach for managing COVID-19 disease in Australia, focused on protecting the community against severe illness for those at highest risk.

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A needle-free influenza vaccine introduced in 2026

On 14 April 2026, WA DoH launched the 2026 WA Health Nasal Spray Influenza Vaccine Program, offering FluMist® for the first time to children aged 2 to 11 years. Eligibility expanded on 30 June 2026 to also include children and adolescents aged 12 to 17 years. This program concluded on 7 August 2026, with 107,490 doses distributed to 1,351 different providers across WA. As at 2 August 2026, 23.1% of children aged 2 to 11 years in WA have received an influenza vaccine, of which 76.2% received FluMist®.

WA DoH wishes to thank all West Australian immunisation providers, for the role they play in recommending, administering and recording vaccines, and protecting the WA community from vaccine preventable diseases.

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