



IMMUNISATION PROVIDER UPDATE - COVID-19 MAINTAINING IMMUNISATION SERVICES

25 March 2020

KEY MESSAGES

- **Continuing to provide vaccinations to the community during the COVID-19 pandemic is vital.**
- **Robust hand-hygiene, clinic cleaning, and disinfection are central to prevent the spread of COVID-19.**
- **Providers should ensure that social distancing is maintained in all areas of their clinic.**
- **Vaccination appointment times should be staggered to avoid crowding in clinic areas.**
- **If walk in clinics for immunisation services are provided they need to ensure adequate social distancing measures can still be implemented during periods of peak attendance.**
- **Staff and clients with symptoms of a respiratory infection should not to attend the clinic.**
- **Additional precautions should be undertaken for medically vulnerable clients as detailed below.**

The current threat of coronavirus (COVID-19) to public health is unprecedented. We must all make an effort to minimise the risk of transmission to staff and clients while continuing to provide comprehensive immunisation services. This document recommends steps, based on currently available evidence, to minimise the risk of COVID-19 transmission to staff and clients.

Recommendations for vaccination venues

It is recommended that signage be displayed at the entrances of all vaccination clinics and should convey the following information:

- Due to the ongoing coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak, this service is taking measures to protect the community. It is vital that the instructions are followed.
- Only one parent/guardian should accompany a child into the waiting area/consultation.
- Clients should not attend the clinic if they have symptoms of a respiratory infection (such as fever, or a sore throat, or a runny nose, or shortness of breath or a cough) or are in home isolation.
- Attendees should wash their hands or use hand sanitiser provided at the entrance to the reception or waiting area.

Consideration should be given to the translation of all signage and messaging into other key community languages.

Social distancing

- Clinics should consider sending SMS reminders to upcoming clients, instructing them not to attend if they are feeling unwell.
- Clients should be advised not to arrive in advance of their appointment. They should arrive on time to minimise the number of people in the waiting area.
- To prevent long wait times, appointment times should be staggered to ensure sufficient time between appointments.
- If possible, vaccination providers should consider moving vaccination services to larger spaced venues.
- Arrange client seating and queueing for administration so that there is at least 1.5 metres between clients.
- Limit the number of people attending. E.g. unaccompanied adult, or 1 adult and an accompanying child.
- Consider a separate room for clients to wait post vaccination if possible.
- If numerous clients arrive at once and there is not enough seating, a staff member should be available to monitor queueing, and maintain the order and flow of clients into the administration area.

- Sit clients at least 1.5 metres from administration staff desk on check in and 1.5 metres from other clients in the waiting area.
- Minimise physical contact with client record documents.
- If walk in clinics for immunisation services are provided they need to ensure adequate social distancing measures can still be implemented during periods of peak attendance.

Vaccine preparation

- Provide adequate disinfection - ensure either hand sanitisers or handwash and paper towels for hand washing with running water are available between clients.
- Display [posters](#) demonstrating proper hand washing technique in handwashing areas.
- Use alcohol-based disinfectant for cleaning surfaces regularly.
- Disinfectant product must be available at both the administration and clinical area.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- PPE additional to that normally used as part of your routine immunisation service is not recommended.
- PPE is only necessary for health care workers seeing patients with symptoms consistent with coronavirus (COVID-19), where there is a much higher risk of transmission.
- More advice on PPE can be found on the WA Health's [coronavirus website](#).

Environmental cleaning

- Regular cleaning of the venue should occur using a detergent **and** disinfectant.
- This can be either by a 2-step cleaning/disinfecting process or using a product that combines both steps.
- If applicable, avoid providing toys that children will share in the waiting area during the COVID-19 outbreak.

Immunisation checklists

- Use a single use page pre-immunisation checklist for each client rather than a laminated version.
- Avoid sharing pens or writing implements where possible. Vaccination providers should keep a pen for their personal use and wipe down any shared stationary between visits.

Designated immunisation sessions

- Consider running specified immunisation only appointment blocks throughout the week to ensure that only well patients are in the clinic during these times.

Communication

- Vaccination providers should ensure that clinic webpages, telephone messages, and venue signage is update regularly with coronavirus (COVID-19) information to ensure clients are aware of the expectations and changes that have been made to the service.

Staff wellness

- Healthcare staff must not attend work if unwell.
- Staff who are under quarantine should not be rostered to provide immunisation services during that period.
- If a member of staff is a health care worker and is a confirmed case of coronavirus (COVID-19), they must not return to work until they determined to be non-infectious, as per national guidance.

Medically vulnerable clients

As influenza season approaches, an increase in medically vulnerable clients seeking immunisation services is anticipated. Precautions should be taken to ensure that these clients are not exposed to increased risk of COVID-19 exposure. This additional advice is particularly important for clients who are 60 years of age or older, Aboriginal, or have underlying comorbidities.

- Vulnerable clients should be booked earlier in the day where possible, and not be required to wait in common areas for prolonged periods.
- Where possible, vaccinations should be given at the same time as other services, to avoid unnecessary repeat visits.
- Consider other vaccination venues, such as home visits, if possible.

Further information and resources

For additional resources and access to updated information about coronavirus (COVID-19), please go to health.wa.gov.au/coronavirus

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Effler', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Dr Paul Effler
SENIOR MEDICAL ADVISOR
COMMUNICABLE DISEASE CONTROL DIRECTORATE