



COVID-19 vaccination planning for young children

As a parent or carer, there are a number of important things to consider before you take your child for their COVID-19 vaccine to try to make it a positive experience for them.

We know that no child likes needles. If your child is anxious about receiving the vaccine, planning ahead and talking to them can help. Here are some things you could discuss / consider with your child:

Before the vaccination

- **When** would they prefer to get immunised e.g. first thing in the morning or afternoon or perhaps on the weekend.
- **Who** would the child like to go with them to support them? This could be the person who is available but also the person who may be able to keep them most calm.
- **What** would the child like to take with them to make them feel more comfortable or to distract them e.g music, toys, iPad etc. You can also talk to your child about calming strategies in the lead up to vaccination. Deep breathing techniques can be used as a coping strategy to help children regulate their emotions and reduce their fear about vaccination.
- **You** and your child need to consider the best environment for where your child can be vaccinated.
- **Read** vaccination information and talk to your GP or other healthcare provider if you have any questions prior to the day. You may like to look at [VaxFacts COVID-19 questions asked and answered](#).

During the vaccination

- **Bring any supports** to the appointment (for example an ipad, music or toy).
- Aim to provide a **calm environment**. The number of people in the room/cubicle should be minimised to only those necessary to support the child. Noise and lights should be kept to a minimum.
- Make sure the **child feels calm and in control**. Instead of telling the child what they need to do to "be still", give them a role "your special job is to keep your arm as still as a statue". Let them choose: "Would you like to watch or look away?"





- **Use positive language** that is age appropriate to acknowledge and praise the child for being cooperative. Try to acknowledge and validate the child's feelings and responses, (*"I can see this feels a bit tricky for you"*) rather than diminish (*"that does not hurt, it is not scary"*).
- **Hold the child appropriately.** Ensure they are comfortable and supported. Appropriate holding positions include one person holding the limb to be immunised without restricting movement of the rest of the child's body while the child is seated. This can be done by providing comfort by holding with an adult's arm around the child's shoulders or holding the child's hands.

After the vaccination

- Smile, encourage and praise the child
- Ask your child for feedback and use that to adjust the plan for next time (*"how did that feel?"*)
- Offer a reward for doing a great job.

The theme for the COVID-19 vaccine for kids in Victoria is the **"enchanted forest of protection"**, with toys and games and imagery to help make the vaccination experience positive for your child. There are also different levels of services available for your child's vaccine appointment. The below table can help you decide where and how to book based on your child's needs.

The table on the next two pages has information on how you can arrange vaccination for you and your child. There are various vaccination pathways depending on how confident and comfortable you and your child are with vaccination.





You and your child	Recommended appointment	How to book
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are confident about getting the COVID-19 vaccination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participating general practices, pharmacies, state vaccination centres/hubs or Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations 	<p>Vaccine clinic finder or call the Coronavirus hotline 1800 675 398.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need additional supports (numbing devices and distractions such as virtual reality headsets) on the day because they find these things hard • Need more support because of special needs • Are easily overwhelmed in crowded spaces • Are scared of needles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your child may be best immunised at a state vaccination centres/hub with access to a low sensory environment that have supports for mild needle anxiety. • We offer specific low sensory clinics. They are listed at https://www.coronavirus.vic.gov.au/vaccination-information-people-disability 	<p>Vaccine clinic finder or call the Coronavirus hotline 1800 675 398 to book at one of the vaccine hubs</p> <p>or</p> <p>Discuss your child's needs with your GP or with a Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) who can assist in preparing for, and booking an appropriate vaccination appointment.</p>





You and your child	Recommended appointment	How to book
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are very afraid of needles • Need help getting vaccinated • Have exhausted all other options or previous techniques to get vaccinated • Need to get vaccinated at home. This service is open to people with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ an injury, chronic health issue, or frailty affecting mobility ○ moderate to severe physical or psychosocial disability ○ moderate to severe mental health or behavioural issues not otherwise classified as a psychosocial disability ○ carer responsibilities ○ for a person with moderate to severe disability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Referral via a GP or DLO to Victorian Specialist Immunisation Service. • People who need to can book a vaccination at home. 	<p>Discuss your child's needs with your GP or with a Disability Liaison Officer (DLO) who can assist in preparing for, and booking an appropriate vaccination appointment. (Please see 'Other supports' below for description of service.)</p> <p>To book a vaccination at home, call the COVID-19 hotline on 1800 675 398. For an interpreter, press 0.</p>

Other supports

- **Vaccination support for children with disability or special needs:** [Disability Liaison Officers](#) (DLO) can help parents in preparing for and booking an appropriate vaccination appointment. A DLO may recommend an appointment at a low sensory clinic, in-home vaccination visit, via a family-friendly General Practice or a sedation service.
- **Information and vaccination support options:** COVID-19 health enquiries, including accessing Victorian State Government payments, can be accessed via the Coronavirus hotline on 1800 375 398, from early January.
- **Victorian Aboriginal COVID-19 Information line:** provides Aboriginal community members access to Aboriginal staff who can answer questions about COVID-19, getting vaccinated and directing callers to available support needed via 1800 312 911 (9 am-5 pm, 7 days a week).

