



# Immunisation

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## New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine Policy Statement

### Policy statement

The New Zealand College of Public Health Medicine (NZCPHM) recognises that immunisation is a highly effective means of preventing a number of infectious diseases and some cancers.

Health professionals have a major responsibility to act as advocates for health at all levels in society.<sup>1,2</sup> In relation to immunisation, this includes the NZCPHM advocating and supporting for evidence-informed<sup>3</sup> policy, including:

- Promoting the immunisation of children and adults according to the National Immunisation Schedule,<sup>4</sup> to achieve the high coverage rates required to prevent outbreaks, eradicate disease, and provide personal protection.
- Achieving immunisation coverage rates for Māori, Pacific and other population groups at the same or better coverage rate as for the New Zealand European population.
- Immunisation of susceptible close contacts etc. in outbreak control of communicable diseases.
- Reducing the impact of communicable diseases in vulnerable age groups, such as vaccination against measles and mumps among 12 to 29 year olds.
- Development of new vaccines to reduce inequitable diseases such as rheumatic fever.
- The recommendation that healthcare workers receive appropriate immunisations, for example, against influenza, measles and pertussis infections, not only for their own protection, but also to reduce the spread of vaccine-preventable diseases to vulnerable patients including the unborn children of pregnant women.<sup>5</sup>

The College reiterates that health professionals, including public health medicine specialists, have an important role in proactively advocating for the benefits of vaccination and addressing misinformation.

### Background

Immunisation is a highly effective population health measure to reduce the transmission of a number of infectious diseases, as well as prevent some cancers, at both individual and population levels.

Inequities in immunisation rates between population groups contribute to disparities in health outcomes. Universal programmes like immunisation reduce health inequities.

The World Health Organization (WHO) recommends the inclusion of vaccinations in national immunisation schedules based on their efficacy and safety.<sup>6</sup>

The New Zealand National Immunisation Schedule<sup>4</sup> sets out the publicly funded vaccines including the ages and circumstances at which vaccines are to be administered. The Schedule is supplemented by a selection of vaccines which may be administered in certain clinical situations. The data on safety, effectiveness, and clinical contraindications for each of the approved vaccines is detailed in the Ministry of Health *Immunisation Handbook 2017*.<sup>5</sup>

Immunisation rates in New Zealand have significantly improved in the past few years. However there remain areas and groups where the immunisation rates are below recommended levels (or targets). Improving and maintaining childhood immunisation coverage continues to be a public health priority.

### Links with other NZCPHM policies

Health Equity

Māori Health

Pacific Peoples' Health

Child Poverty and Health

First 1000 Days of Life

### References

1. World Health Organization. Health Promotion Glossary. Geneva: World Health Organization, 1998. (<http://www.who.int/healthpromotion/about/HPR%20Glossary%201998.pdf?ua=1>)
2. New Zealand Medical Association. Consensus statement on the role of the doctor in New Zealand. NZMA Position Statement. Wellington: NZMA, 2011. (<https://www.nzma.org.nz/publications/role-of-the-doctor-consensus-statement>)
3. Gluckman P. Enhancing evidence-informed policy making: a report by the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor. Wellington: Office of the Prime Minister's Chief Science Advisor, 2017. (<http://www.pmcsa.org.nz/wp-content/uploads/17-07-07-Enhancing-evidence-informed-policy-making.pdf>)
4. PHARMAC. NZ Pharmaceutical Schedule: National Immunisation Schedule. Wellington: PHARMAC, 2017. (<http://www.pharmac.govt.nz/2017/07/01/Schedule.pdf>, <http://www.pharmac.govt.nz/patients/PharmaceuticalSchedule/Schedule?code=A45>, <http://www.pharmac.govt.nz/patients/PharmaceuticalSchedule/Schedule?code=A452501>)
5. New Zealand Ministry of Health. Immunisation Handbook 2017. Wellington: Ministry of Health, 2017. (<http://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/publications/immunisation-handbook-2017-may17-v2.pdf>)
6. World Health Organization. Vaccine Position Statements. Geneva. (Various dates) (<http://www.who.int/immunization/documents/positionpapers/en/index.html>)

### **Further information**

WHO, UNICEF, World Bank. State of the world's vaccines and immunisation, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Geneva: World Health Organization, 2009. (<http://www.who.int/immunization/sowvi/en/>)

The Immunisation Advisory Centre: [www.immune.org.nz](http://www.immune.org.nz)

Ministry of Health: [www.moh.govt.nz/immunisation](http://www.moh.govt.nz/immunisation)

### **Acknowledgement**

This policy statement was developed by the NZCPHM Policy Committee, and NZCPHM members and staff. The NZCPHM also thanks non-College member Lynnette Borissenko. This statement updates the College's policy statement of 2012, which in turn was based on Toi Te Ora – Public Health Service's Immunisation Position Statement 2012 (Bay of Plenty and Lakes DHBs).

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