



Vaccination and Immunisation for Nurses and Midwives

It is estimated that two to three million deaths due to communicable diseases are averted each year through world-wide vaccination programs¹. Immunisation of millions of individuals occurs on a global scale. In cities and towns, rural, remote and isolated communities, UNICEF and the World Health Organisation oversee an immunisation program of enormous proportions reaching into most countries. Australian nurses and midwives are part of this global effort.

It is the policy of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation that:

1. ANMF supports the aim of the World Health Organisation's Global Vaccine Action Plan 2011-2020², the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: 2016-2020 CDC's Strategic Framework for Global Immunisation³ and the Immunise Australia Program⁴. The Immunise Australia Program aims to increase national immunisation rates for preventable diseases.
2. Immunisation is a safe and practical public health program which protects people from many diseases, preventing the spread of disease throughout the population and within specific communities.^{2 3 4}
3. Immunisation serves three specific purposes in relation to nurses and midwives:
 - a) Nurses and midwives who are vaccinated are part of the general population and contribute to 'herd immunity';
 - b) Nurses and midwives who are vaccinated assist in preventing the spread of disease in health care settings; and
 - c) Vaccination provides a level of protection in relation to the health of nurses and midwives who are exposed to diseases in health care settings, and therefore contributes to prevention of work-related disease.
4. All nurses and midwives are strongly encouraged to have routine vaccination to the fullest extent unless medically contraindicated.
5. Nurses and midwives are required to practice in accordance with the professional codes and guidelines set by the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA).
6. Nurses and midwives have a professional responsibility to:
 - a) promote the benefits of immunisation to enable informed decision making;
 - b) provide evidence based information and promote authoritative sources of immunisation information. The Australian Immunisation Handbook provides evidence based clinical advice for nurses and midwives⁵;
 - c) be informed of myths and realities around immunisation to assist in answering questions professionally⁶;
 - d) advocate for population groups and members of communities to ensure affordable, local access to immunisation programs;
 - e) lead by example and maintain their own immunisation status through routine vaccination and boosters; and
 - f) behave in a professional manner and understand their innate authority when discussing issues around immunisation and vaccination with the general public, including on social media.



7. Nurses and midwives should be aware of the NMBA position statement: *Nurses, midwives and vaccination*.⁷
8. Nurses and midwives are encouraged to meet evidence based workplace immunisation requirements unless medically contraindicated and need to be aware that they may experience restrictions on where they can work, for their own protection, if they are not immunised for whatever reason.

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References

1. UNICEF (United Nations Children's Fund) http://www.unicef.org/immunization/index_bigpicture.html
2. World Health Organisation. *Global Vaccine Action Plan 2011-2020*
http://www.who.int/immunization/documents/general/ISBN_978_92_4_150498_0/en/
3. Centre for Disease Control and Prevention. *CDC's Strategic Framework for Global Immunisation 2016-2020*
<https://www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/immunization/>
4. <http://immunise.health.gov.au/internet/immunise/publishing.nsf/Content/about-the-program>
5. The Australian Immunisation Handbook. 10th edition, 2015.
<http://www.immunise.health.gov.au/internet/immunise/publishing.nsf/Content/Handbook10-home>
6. Department of Health and Ageing *Myths and Realities. Responding to arguments against vaccination. A Guide for providers* 5th ed. DoHA, 2013. <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/immunise/publishing.nsf/Content/uci-myths-guideprov>
7. Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA). *Position Statement: Nurses, midwives and vaccination 2016*.
<http://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Position-Statements/vaccination.aspx>