



## Vaccination and Immunisation

It is estimated that two to three million deaths due to communicable diseases are averted each year through world-wide vaccination programs<sup>1</sup>. 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. Nurses and midwives in Australia 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 2011-2020<sup>2</sup>, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: 2016-2020 CDC's Strategic Framework for Global Immunisation<sup>3</sup> and the Immunise Australia Program<sup>4</sup>. 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.<sup>2 3 4</sup>
3. Immunisation serves three specific purposes in relation to nurses and midwives:
  - a) Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing\* who are vaccinated are part of the general population and contribute to 'herd immunity';
  - b) Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing 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, midwives and assistants in nursing who are exposed to diseases in health care settings, and therefore contributes to prevention of work-related disease.
4. All nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing are strongly encouraged to have routine vaccination to the fullest extent, unless medically contraindicated.
5. Nurses and midwives should be aware of the NMBA position statement: *Nurses, midwives and vaccination*.<sup>5</sup>
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 midwives<sup>6</sup>;
  - c) be informed of myths and realities around immunisation to assist in answering questions professionally<sup>7</sup>;
  - 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.

\*The term assistant in nursing also refers to care workers (however titled)



7. 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).
8. Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing are encouraged to meet evidence-based workplace immunisation requirements. These requirements must recognise that vaccination may be medically contraindicated for some individuals
9. Nurses, midwives and assistants in nursing 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, and that health services have an obligation to take all reasonably practicable steps to provide a safe workplace for employees, patients, residents and visitors.

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#### References

1. World Health Organisation (2019). *Immunization coverage fact sheet*. See <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/immunization-coverage>
2. World Health Organisation (2013). *Global vaccine action plan 2011-2020*. See [https://www.who.int/immunization/global\\_vaccine\\_action\\_plan/GVAP\\_doc\\_2011\\_2020/en/](https://www.who.int/immunization/global_vaccine_action_plan/GVAP_doc_2011_2020/en/)
3. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2016). *CDC's strategic framework for global immunization 2016-2020*. See <https://www.cdc.gov/globalhealth/immunization/docs/global-immunization-framework-508.pdf>
4. Australia. Department of Health (2019). *Immunisation*. See <https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/immunisation>
5. Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (2016). *Position statement on nurses, midwives and vaccination*. See <https://www.nursingmidwiferyboard.gov.au/Codes-Guidelines-Statements/Position-Statements/vaccination.aspx>
6. Australia. Department of Health (2018). *Immunisation handbook*. See <https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au/>
7. Australia. Department of Health and Ageing (2013). *Myths and realities: responding to arguments against vaccination – a guide for providers* (5<sup>th</sup> ed). Canberra: DoHA.