

Change to the Australian Standard Vaccination Schedule

On 9 July 1998 the National Health and Medical Research Council endorsed a change in the timing of the second dose of measles-mumps-rubella vaccination. This was previously recommended to be given between ages 10-16 years. It is now recommended to be given prior to school entry at age 4-5 years. The first dose should continue to be given at age 12 months.

Change to NHMRC Australian Standard Vaccination Schedule	First MMR dose	Second MMR dose
Old schedule	12 months	10 – 16 years
New schedule	12 months	Prior to school entry at 4 – 5 years

Immunise Australia Program: Measles Control Campaign

The widely publicised Measles Control Campaign vaccinations commenced this week and will run until November 1998. During the Campaign, all primary school age children (5-12 years old) will be offered a one-off free dose of MMR vaccine to ensure that they do not miss out on their second dose because of the recent change in the immunisation schedule (see above).

Vaccination will be provided in school based clinics, but many parents will seek advice from their general practitioners about the Campaign and some may wish their child to be vaccinated by their own health care provider.

As part of the Campaign, parents of children aged 1-4 years who have missed their first dose of MMR have been sent a letter from the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR) reminding them that their child's immunisation is overdue. In addition, secondary school principals will remind parents of teenage children (12-18 years old) about the need to ensure that their child has received two doses of MMR vaccine and encourage them to update their child's immunisation with their local general practitioner or health care provider.

General practitioners are encouraged to offer opportunistic vaccination for all recommended vaccine preventable diseases. During the Campaign, general practitioners should:

For primary school children (aged 5 -12 years)

- Encourage parents to have the child vaccinated for MMR through the school-based program

OR

- Offer opportunistic vaccination for MMR

For children aged 1-4 years

- Check immunisation status and offer opportunistic vaccination for MMR if child has missed their first dose.

For secondary school children (aged 12-18 years)

- Check immunisation status and offer opportunistic vaccination for MMR if child has not received two previous doses.

If status is uncertain, it is safe to provide another dose, provided there has been at least a one month interval between doses.

For the duration of the campaign, all immunisation providers should immediately report any serious or unexpected reactions to MMR to the State or Territory Measles contact number listed below.

Australian Capital Territory	(02) 6205 2220
New South Wales	(02) 9845 0726
Northern Territory	(08) 8922 8044
Queensland	(07) 3250 8614
South Australia	(08) 8226 7194
Tasmania	(03) 6233 3775
Victoria	(03) 9637 4136
Western Australia	(08) 9388 4999

Doctors can obtain further information on the Campaign from their local Division of General Practice, or RACGP State faculty. Information can also be obtained from local health authorities or through the *Immunise Australia* website at <http://immunise.health.gov.au>