

Immunisation for individuals with additional needs

Supporting individuals who may experience difficulties during vaccination



Consider a pre-appointment to:

Questions to ask at the pre-appointment

“What has been the patient’s experience with previous vaccinations?”

“Does the patient have any particular behaviours or triggers that we can plan for? Do you have any suggestions on how these can be managed?”

“Do other health professional/s who care for the patient (e.g. occupational therapist) also have advice?”

“Will you discuss the upcoming appointment with the patient?”

- gather information about the patient
- understand the patient’s previous vaccination experiences
- identify other health professionals (e.g. allied health professional/s) who are involved in the care of the patient
- detail the appointment-day process (see ‘Helpful links’)
- discuss the number of vaccinations to be given and how these will be administered
- establish expectations and advise that vaccination may not be successful at the first visit
- provide practical guidance; for example:
 - accessible clothing should be worn
 - advise carer on supportive holding techniques
- establish the role of each person involved (e.g. support person, distraction person and vaccinator)
- discuss when to stop the vaccination process if the patient is distressed
- discuss if the patient will be advised of the appointment (consider the age of the patient and their cognitive ability in deciding this).



Clinical considerations

- Who is the appropriate person to provide informed consent for vaccination?
- Is the patient able to assent to the procedure?
- Before the procedure, discuss supportive holding techniques.
- Refer to the [Australian Immunisation Handbook](#) for further information regarding [valid consent](#) and [positioning for vaccination](#).



Practice adjustments and considerations

- Suggest appointment times when the practice or clinic will be less busy.
- Allow extra family or carer support.
- Enable the patient to be seen by a familiar doctor or nurse.
- Enable two vaccinators to be present, especially if more than one vaccine is required.
- Use a dedicated private consultation room.
- Allow the patient, family and/or carer to walk straight into a dedicated quiet room to minimise waiting time.
- Prepare the vaccine out of view of the patient, preferably in another room.
- Provide distraction tools and techniques (see 'Helpful links').



What if vaccination was not successful?

- Review what worked and what did not work during the appointment.
- Consider what adjustments could be made to try again.
- Arrange a follow-up appointment with the family to discuss the options for trying again.
- Consider further discussion with the [Specialist Immunisation Service](#) in your state or territory. These services provide clinical advice on immunisation for patients with complex medical backgrounds or who have had an adverse event following immunisation. Some services will also accept referrals following a discussion with the immunisation provider.

Helpful links

Holding techniques

[Australian Immunisation Handbook](#)



Specialist Immunisation Services

[NCIRS](#)



COVID-19 vaccination social scripts

Amaze resources:

[Going to the GP to get my COVID-19 vaccine social script](#)

[Going to a pharmacy to get my COVID-19 vaccine social script \(for teenagers\)](#)

[Going to a pharmacy to get my COVID-19 vaccine social script \(for adults\)](#)



Distraction techniques

[Australian Immunisation Handbook Ideas for distracting children during vaccination](#)



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Kids and COVID-19 vaccinations

[What to expect videos](#)

