

Dear Parents and Carers

On the advice of the Victorian and Australian governments, over the last 18 months we have implemented several measures to reduce the risk of students catching and spreading COVID-19, and to help keep our students and each other safe.

These measures include ventilation of indoor spaces, additional cleaning, regular use of hand sanitiser and the wearing of masks, alongside increasing vaccination rates in our community.

COVID-19 vaccines have been tested, and shown to be safe and effective in protecting against serious illness and reducing the likelihood of COVID-19 spreading. They are important to protect you and your loved ones from COVID-19, and to reduce disruption to your child's education and out-of-school activities.

On 10 January 2022, children aged 5 to 11 will be eligible for COVID-19 vaccinations.

These vaccinations will be available at participating general practices, pharmacies, Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations and state vaccination centres.

The vaccine is one-third of the adult dose and will be delivered over two separate appointments, expected to be eight weeks apart. The time between the two doses can be shortened in special circumstances, such as in an outbreak response or for international travel.

The commencement of the program on 10 January 2022 provides an opportunity for all children aged 5 to 11 to receive at least one vaccine dose before they return to school, and their second dose before the end of Term 1, 2022.

Archbishop of Melbourne, Peter A Comensoli, has said that 'in our faith tradition, all the available vaccines in Australia are permissible to receive'. He has strongly encouraged the people of the Archdiocese of Melbourne to get vaccinated.

You are strongly encouraged to book your child or children in to receive their first vaccination before Term 1 begins.

Vaccination is not mandatory to attend school, but it is highly encouraged to keep all children and their families safe.

How to book an appointment

Bookings will be available later in December 2021.

You will be able to book a vaccine appointment at a participating general practice, pharmacy, community health service or state vaccination centre through the [Vaccine Clinic Finder](#).

Victorian Coronavirus Hotline

The Victorian Government's [Coronavirus Hotline](#) on 1800 675 398 can assist you with bookings at a general practice, pharmacy or state vaccination centre, and help with any questions you have about vaccination.

Support for students with disability or special requirements

There is [extra support](#) available for students with disability or special requirements to access COVID-19 vaccinations. The [Association for Children with a Disability](#) will hold a Facebook Live session for families of children with additional needs on Tuesday 11 January at 10.30 am. You can [register online](#).

Parent and community webinars

Experts from the Royal Children's Hospital will hold a Facebook Live session – 'COVID-19 vaccinations for 5 to 11 year olds: Your questions answered' on Thursday 16 December at 11.00 am. This [Facebook page](#) has further details about the session.

More information

Resources are available to help you and your child or children prepare for the vaccination:

- [Needle phobia – The Melbourne Vaccine Education Centre \(MVEC\)](#)
- [Tips to help a child afraid of needles and stop it becoming a phobia – ABC Everyday](#)
- [The ABCs of COVID vaccines – Sesame Street](#).

The Victorian Government's coronavirus website also has [translated information about COVID-19 vaccines](#) in multiple community languages.

To ensure the safest start to the 2022 school year for your child or children, I encourage you to help them get vaccinated before they return to school.

Kind regards