

COVID-19 and the SIP vaccines – HPV & dTpa

Information for teens, parents, schools and health professionals

Many people have reported that COVID-19 anxiety or the illness itself, restrictions and school closures have impacted their opportunity to have the School Immunisation Program (SIP) vaccines, HPV (Human Papillomavirus Virus) & dTpa (Diphtheria, Tetanus & Pertussis) vaccines.

Now things are getting back to normal it's important to remember that it is recommended that all children aged 12–13 years have the dTpa and HPV vaccine. The HPV vaccination is most effective when given at a younger age, before sexual activity has commenced. Having the vaccine now means children will be less likely to develop HPV-related cancers or genital warts in the future.

While COVID-19 has disrupted our lives, the benefits of the SIP vaccinations are long lasting. It is vital that teens, parents, schools and health professionals make every effort to encourage their young people to have their HPV and dTpa vaccine as close to the recommended schedule or catch up as soon as possible so they don't get left behind.

- **HPV-related cancers and sexual activity are a long way off in my child's future. Can't I just wait until the immediate COVID-19 situation calms down before they get the HPV vaccine?**

The HPV vaccine is most effective when given to children between ages 9 and 14. Research shows that younger people create more antibodies to the vaccine than those aged in their late teens. This is why those aged 14 and under only need two doses instead of three. Delaying vaccination to an older age means that a third dose is needed, and HPV vaccination may not be free of charge.

Other medical issues don't stop because of COVID-19. During what is already a difficult time, it is vitally important that people look after their health. While the HPV virus might not seem like a priority now, COVID-19 should not prevent us from taking the best possible care of our children and protecting their future.

Having the HPV vaccine is the same as any other vaccine – it is to protect your child over the course of their life, not because they are likely to be exposed to HPV in the near future.

- **I've had COVID and am still feeling unwell. Can I go ahead with my SIP vaccines?**

If you are still impacted by COVID-related symptoms, it is best that you wait until you feel well to have the vaccines. If you miss getting the SIP vaccines at school, you can catch up on any missed doses by calling your local immunisation provider, Eastern Health Authority (EHA)- www.eha.sa.gov.au

- **How long do I have to wait after a COVID vaccination or booster to have the SIP vaccinations? Or vice versa?**

No time at all. There is no minimum amount of time required between the SIP and COVID vaccinations so technically, you can have both on the same day!

- **What steps are our school and immunisation providers taking to keep teens safe from COVID on vaccination day?**

Local council immunisation services and secondary schools are continuing to work together to safely deliver the secondary school immunisation program during the COVID-19 pandemic. All COVID Safe protocols are followed by professional trained immunisation providers, generally nurses. Schools are provided detailed information about keeping their students safe on vaccination days.