



THE HON NICOLA ROXON MP
Minister for Health and Ageing

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Handbook to assist with best immunisation practice

I am pleased to announce the release of the ninth edition of the Australian Immunisation Handbook.

This book helps doctors and parents ensure that children are properly immunised, at the right time - keeping kids healthy.

The book indicates timelines and advice including on immunising against polio, meningococcal, chickenpox, pneumococcal and rotavirus.

Immunisation is an essential element of the preventative health framework, which is a priority for the Rudd Government.

The handbook provides important information to health professionals on immunisation practice, new vaccines and vaccine preventable diseases in Australia. It is based on up-to-date scientific research and is endorsed by the National Health and Medical Research Council of Australia.

Best-practice clinical guidelines are included for those vaccines provided free under the National Immunisation Program: those funded under the Pharmaceuticals Benefits Scheme; and other privately funded vaccines.

Immunisation plays an important role in protecting us against harmful infections and health complications by using the body's natural defence mechanism to build resistance to specific infections.

The ninth edition also includes new chapters on rotavirus and the human papillomavirus (HPV). Immunisation programs against both of these viruses are part of the National Immunisation Program which is delivered jointly by the Commonwealth Government and the states and territories.

The vaccine against rotavirus protects children against severe diarrhoea, which is responsible for 10,000 hospitalisations, 22,000 emergency department visits and 115,000 GP visits every year for children under five years of age.

The HPV vaccine protects women against certain strains of the virus, known to cause seven out of 10 cases of cervical cancer.

I think this handbook will be of great value to all Australian health professionals and thank the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation for its work in developing this valuable resource.

Contact: Mark Ward 0437 125 938