

23 April 2026

## 150 million lives saved in the past 50 years: The stats don't lie on immunisation... get jabbed!

World Immunization Week  
24-30 April 2026

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) is urging rural and remote Australians to ensure they and their children are up-to-date on immunisations, saying the global success of immunisation has demonstrated time and again its importance, safety and effectiveness in saving lives.

Immunisation has saved more than 150 million lives worldwide over 50 years, improved infant survival by 40% and protected tens of millions of children from over 30 life-threatening diseases and infections (and for some of those diseases, subsequent lifelong disabilities).

**In the lead-up to World Immunization Week 2026 (24-30 April), RDAA President, Dr Sarah Chalmers, said:** "Our key message to rural and remote Australians is – don't believe the 'fake news' about immunisation, don't be a disbeliever or denier, and don't be a dawdler in getting immunised either!



"It's also very important to ensure your kids are up-to-date on their immunisations, and that any missed immunisations are followed-up – your local general practice or government immunisation service can assist you in finding out what catch-up doses they may need.

"We are very fortunate in Australia to have a high quality immunisation program that is very safe, very effective, prevents some very serious diseases and subsequent disabilities, and saves lives every single day.

"So it is extremely concerning to see rates of immunisation continuing to drop here, particularly when vaccines are so widely available and – for many of the vaccines – available at no cost to the patient.

"As a nation, childhood immunisation coverage has fallen for five consecutive years, and we remain below the vaccination target of 95% of Australia's children for all childhood vaccinations.

"Teenage vaccine coverage for Adolescent Human Papillomavirus (HPV – which can cause cervical cancer and other types of cancers) has also dropped significantly since 2020. Recent research shows that while Australia is on the cusp of eliminating cervical cancer by 2035, that is now at risk due to the declining rate of immunisation.

"It's not just child vaccination rates we should be worried about either – adult vaccination rates for influenza and shingles (Zoster) are low, with only about 51% of older Australian adults receiving all recommended government-funded vaccinations.

"It is beyond belief that many people are happy to be guided by 'fake news' posts about immunisation from Joe Blogs on social media – and make a decision not to get themselves or their kids immunised based purely on blatant fearmongering – while they happily ignore global scientific research showing just how safe and effective immunisation is, and also ignore the serious consequences of not getting immunised.

“We need approximately 95% of our population to be vaccinated to achieve broad population (or herd) immunity against a variety of diseases, so when you take into account those people who may have a medical condition that prevents vaccination, you simply cannot rely on everyone else around you being vaccinated to keep you safe – you need to be vaccinated too.

“You only need to look at other countries where immunisation is not as readily available as in Australia, to see the very negative impact it can have on increased rates of serious disease outcomes and otherwise preventable deaths and disability.

“Additionally, we can’t discount the resurgence of some very serious diseases like polio should we let vaccination rates slide. While Australia was declared polio free in 2000, we won’t remain that way if not enough people are vaccinated, particularly given we live in a very connected world with extensive international travel.

“We urge all rural and remote Australians to ‘get real’ on immunisation – don’t be a disbeliever, denier or a dawdler, don’t believe the ‘fake news’, and ensure you and your kids are up-to-date on immunisations.

“It can literally save your life.”

---

**Free RSV vaccinations for older Australians from 15 May** – RDAA has welcomed an announcement from the Federal Government that free Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) vaccinations will be available for those aged 75 and over (and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from the age of 60) from 15 May, to ensure they are protected from this common and potentially deadly respiratory virus. Aged care residents are particularly vulnerable due to shared living arrangements and frequent contact with staff and visitors. [Read more here](#).

**Free influenza vaccines are available under the National Immunisation Program (NIP) for people most at risk of developing severe illness and complications, including:** children aged 6 months to less than 5 years, First Nations people aged 6 months and older, adults aged 65 years and over, pregnant women, and people aged 6 months or older with underlying medical conditions that increase their risk of complications from influenza. [Read more here](#).

**Key vaccine-preventable diseases include:** Whooping Cough (Pertussis), Influenza, Pneumococcal Disease, Haemophilus Influenzae Type B (Hib), COVID-19, Tuberculosis (TB), Measles, Mumps, Rubella, Polio, Hepatitis A and B, Varicella (Chickenpox), Shingles, Rotavirus, Meningococcal Disease, Tetanus, HPV (Human Papillomavirus), Yellow Fever and Rabies – noting that Australia’s vaccination program does not automatically provide vaccine coverage for all these diseases.

**The theme of World Immunization Week 2026 is “For every generation, vaccines work”** – celebrating the long-term impact of immunization across the world. The Week aims to promote how vaccines have safely protected people, families and communities for generations – and continue to safeguard our future.

**More information:**

- [World Immunization Week 2026 \(WHO website\)](#)
- [National Immunisation Program \(Australian Government\)](#)
- [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(immunisation statistics\)](#)
- [National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance \(Australia\)](#)
- [Immunisation Coalition \(Australia\)](#)

Please [click here](#) for a downloadable photo of Dr Chalmers.

**Available for interview:**

RDAA President, Dr Sarah Chalmers

**Media contact:**

Patrick Daley on 0408 004 890