

Little impact of COVID-19 pandemic on routine childhood vaccination in Australia

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The COVID-19 pandemic has caused widespread social disruption globally, with routine immunization services affected in many countries.

Researchers from the National Centre for Immunization Research and Surveillance (NCIRS) analyzed Australian Immunization Register (AIR) data, assessing uptake monthly and at earlier time points than usual, to determine if the pandemic and associated response measures such as physical distancing and movement restrictions have impacted vaccination uptake in young children.

The report, "COVID-19: Impact on routine childhood vaccination uptake in Australia," released today, found no substantial impact on vaccination uptake at any of the National Immunization Program schedule points of 2, 4, 6, 12, 18, and 48 months of age, at national or state/territory level, for vaccines due up to July 2020.

"This report provides the first published evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic has had little impact

on routine childhood immunization in Australia," said lead author Dr. Frank Beard, Associate Director, NCIRS.

"This welcome finding likely reflects a combination of consistent messaging from [health authorities](#) about maintaining immunization during the pandemic, provision of COVID-19 safe vaccination services and continued public engagement with immunization," said Dr. Beard.

NCIRS also released its Annual Immunization Coverage Report 2019 today, which shows [coverage](#) rates continued to increase in 2019.

The report, which examined AIR data for children at 12, 24 and 60 months of age, shows that 'fully vaccinated' coverage rates were higher in 2019 than 2018 at all three age milestones, for both children overall and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

Influenza vaccination coverage for children aged six months to under five years increased substantially in 2019, for both children overall and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children.

"This report demonstrates continuing improvements across a range of immunization indicators in Australia in 2019," said Dr. Beard. "However, we show that some issues with timeliness of vaccination persist, particularly in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and socioeconomically disadvantaged [children](#)." The full immunization coverage report is accompanied by a summary report, which presents key findings from the Annual Immunization Coverage Report 2019.

More information: The report is available online: ncirs.org.au/reports

Provided by National Centre for Immunisation

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