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The following information has been provided by the Department of Health and Ageing.

The *Australian Immunisation Handbook 8th edition 2003* is now available

The *Australian Immunisation Handbook 8th edition 2003* was approved by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) on 18 September 2003.

How to get a copy

The Handbook is available in the following formats:

- on the Immunise Australia website at <http://immunise.health.gov.au>
- in print—copies will be distributed by December 2003 to all immunisation providers listed on the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (the ACIR) and Medicare databases;
- as an interactive CD-ROM which will be distributed with printed copies. It will be available on the Immunise Australia website from October 2003.

If you have not received a copy of the new Handbook by the end of the year and you would like one, please:

- email handbook@health.gov.au;
- call the Immunisation Infoline on 1800 671 811; or
- visit Immunise Australia at <http://immunise.health.gov.au>

What's new in the Handbook?

There have been changes to the Australian Standard Vaccination Schedule (ASVS) and the National Immunisation Program (NIP). The ASVS lists all technical recommendations for vaccination made on the basis of disease burden, vaccine effectiveness in preventing disease and cost-effectiveness of the vaccine in a population setting, whereas the NIP lists all vaccines provided free to the Australian population.

Changes to the ASVS

The ASVS includes several new vaccine recommendations. They are:

- Inactivated Poliomyelitis Vaccine (IPV) in combination vaccines;
- pneumococcal conjugate vaccine for all children;
- varicella vaccine; and
- diphtheria-tetanus-acellular pertussis (dTpa) vaccine for adolescents.

The ASVS no longer recommends the 18 month dose of DTPa vaccine. This is effective immediately.

Immunisation Network Update

Changes to the National Immunisation Program (NIP)

- The 18 month dose of DTPa has been removed from the NIP as recommended by the NHMRC. This means children (18 months old) no longer need to visit an immunisation provider for the DTPa vaccination. The booster dose of DTPa at four years old is still recommended.
- Combined diphtheria and tetanus vaccine (dT) for adolescents aged 15–19 years old will be replaced by an adult/adolescent formulation diphtheria-tetanus-acellular pertussis (dTpa) vaccine dose at 15–17 years old. This will be effective from 1 January 2004.
- The National Childhood Pneumococcal Vaccination Program will also be expanded to provide free vaccine to additional children with conditions that predispose them to pneumococcal disease. These medical risk groups are listed in the Handbook and on the Immunise Australia website at <http://immunise.health.gov.au>
- In order to maintain a child's complete immunisation history on the ACIR, immunisation providers are encouraged to report all vaccines administered to children whether or not they are part of the NIP. The ACIR will record vaccines listed on the ASVS that are not funded under the NIP, as non-standard vaccines.

The General Practice Immunisation Incentives (GPII) scheme will use the NIP to assess the child's immunisation status. From the November 2003 GPII calculation, a child will no longer require a dose of DTPa at 18 months to be considered as fully immunised.

- Service Incentive Payments (SIP) will be made for each completed schedule of the NIP, due at two months, four months, six months, 12 months and four years.

New information

The Handbook has new information about:

- vaccines for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people;
- international travel;
- occupational hazard; and
- special risk groups.

The following information has also been updated:

- vaccine preventable diseases; and
- adverse events following immunisation and what to do about them.

For more information

Please contact your State or Territory health department for more information on the NIP.

Contact numbers

ACT	02 6205 2300
NSW	Public Health Unit (look under 'Health' in the White Pages)
NT	08 8922 8044
Qld	07 3234 1500
SA	08 8226 7177
Tas	03 6233 3762 or 1800 671 738
Vic	03 9637 4144
WA	08 9321 1312

For general information about the National Immunisation Program please visit Immunise Australia at <http://immunise.health.gov.au> or call the Immunisation Infoline on 1800 671 811.