

# Media Release

**The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP**

Minister for Health

Minister for Ambulance Services



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## MORE ACCESS TO JAPANESE ENCEPHALITIS VACCINE

More Victorians will soon be able to receive a Japanese encephalitis vaccine to protect themselves against the infection spread by mosquitoes before the warmer months.

Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today announced the eligibility criteria has been expanded to give specific priority groups the vaccine for free, including those who may be exposed to the virus at work.

The newly expanded criteria for priority groups includes anyone who lives or usually works in the local government areas of Mildura, Swan Hill, Gannawarra, Campaspe, Moira, Greater Shepparton, Indigo and Wodonga.

Those eligible include people aged between 50 and 65 who work in a role that is largely outdoors, specifically those who spend more than four hours outdoors each day.

The vaccine will be available from select GPs, local public health units (including some COVID-19 vaccination hubs), community pharmacies and local councils.

Japanese encephalitis virus can cause a rare, potentially serious infection of the brain and is spread to humans by mosquito bites.

Most people will have no symptoms, but one per cent of people may experience a fever and headache, which can develop into a serious disease. Victoria recorded its first-ever case of Japanese encephalitis virus earlier this year.

The virus typically occurs in many parts of southeast Asia, China, Papua New Guinea and the Torres Strait – and occasionally in northern Queensland.

In addition to the vaccine, there are simple steps those at risk can take to protect themselves from mosquito bites, including wearing long, loose-fitting clothing outdoors, using mosquito repellents with active ingredients such as picaridin or DEET on all exposed skin and limiting outdoor activity if lots of mosquitoes are present.

For more information and advice regarding Japanese encephalitis, visit: [betterhealth.vic.gov.au/japanese-encephalitis](https://betterhealth.vic.gov.au/japanese-encephalitis).

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

*“We’re making sure more people can access the Japanese encephalitis vaccine before the warmer months to protect themselves and their loved ones.”*

*“Getting vaccinated is one important step people at risk can take, along with simple actions like wearing loose-fitting clothes and using the right mosquito repellent.”*