

Media Release

The Hon Gabrielle Williams MP
Minister for Mental Health
Minister for Ambulance Services
Minister for Treaty and First Peoples
Acting Minister for Health
Acting Minister for Health Infrastructure
Acting Minister for Medical Research



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FREE JAPANESE ENCEPHALITIS VACCINES AVAILABLE

The Andrews Labor Government is providing free Japanese encephalitis (JE) vaccines to protect Victorians at risk of the virus – particularly in northern Victoria.

Acting Minister for Health Gabrielle Williams today announced Victoria’s expanded JE vaccine eligibility will continue for this summer.

The call for at-risk communities to be vaccinated against the JE virus comes as the Department of Health launches a new campaign warning of the risks of mosquito-borne diseases, which will run across social media with the support of healthcare providers like GPs, primary health networks and community pharmacists.

People should get vaccinated ahead of summer, which brings an increased mosquito presence – vaccination against JE is available for people who live or work in any of the following high-risk local government areas:

- Benalla
- Buloke
- Campaspe
- Gannawarra
- Greater Bendigo
- Greater Shepparton
- Hindmarsh
- Horsham
- Indigo
- Loddon
- Mildura
- Moira
- Northern Grampians
- Strathbogie
- Swan Hill
- Towong
- Wangaratta
- West Wimmera
- Wodonga
- Yarriambiack

These 20 local government areas are considered at higher risk of JE virus infection especially for people regularly spending time outdoors. The vaccine is free and available from GPs, Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, community pharmacies and local councils.

Local Public Health Units for Goulburn Valley, Loddon Mallee, Ovens Murray and Grampians will also undertake work to raise public awareness and improve access to the vaccine.

Most people with Japanese Encephalitis virus infection do not show or have only mild symptoms – but in extreme cases, it may lead to death or permanent disability.

Symptoms usually develop five to 15 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito. Symptoms include fever, headaches and vomiting. Symptoms for severe infections can include severe headaches, neck or back stiffness, sensitivity to light, confusion, seizures, paralysis and comas.

The risks of infection from mosquito bites rises usually between November and March when there is an increased number of mosquitos. To know if you live or work in a higher risk area and for the full eligibility criteria, visit health.vic.gov.au/infectious-diseases/japanese-encephalitis.

Quotes attributable to Acting Minister for Health Gabrielle Williams

“Now is the perfect time to get vaccinated against Japanese Encephalitis virus - it’ll protect you ahead of this year’s mosquito season.”

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"You can get your vaccination today through your immunisation provider including GPs, Aboriginal community-controlled organisations, community pharmacies or local council."