

Changes to the Maternity Immunisation Allowance (MIA)

In the 2008-2009 Federal Budget it was announced that the Maternity Immunisation Allowance (MIA) will be separated into two payments. Currently the MIA (\$243.30) is paid to eligible parents/guardians when their child is 18 – 24 months of age. From 1 January 2009 parents of children turning 18 months of age will receive the MIA split into two payments: Half will be paid at 18 – 24 months and the remaining half at 4 years 3 months – 5 years of age.

To meet the requirements of these changes the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (ACIR) will change the *National Due and Overdue Rules for Childhood Immunisation*.

Impact of the new definition of 'overdue for the 4-year-old immunisations'

Currently the ACIR *National Due and Overdue Rules* state that a child is due for their 4-year-old vaccinations at 4 years of age and **overdue when they turn 5 years of age**.

From 1 January 2009 the overdue rule will change for all children born from 1 January 2005 onwards. The ACIR *National Due and Overdue Rules* will state that the child is due for their 4-year-old vaccinations at 4 years and **overdue at 4 years 1 month of age**.

What do the changes mean for parents/guardians?

Children will need to have their 4-year-old immunisations for their parents to receive the second MIA and ongoing child-care subsidy. (The majority of parents will have already received the full MIA allowance at 18 months. **However if they did not** claim the 18 month payment and the child was born from 1 January 2005 they can claim the full MIA at 4 years 3 months, provided the child is fully vaccinated.

Parents/guardians will be required to have their children immunised **within 1 month of the child's 4th birthday**, in order to retain their child-care subsidy.

Impact on immunisation providers

- Children born from 1 January 2005 will be considered overdue for vaccination at 4 years 1 month. This may impact on the GPII outcomes payment if these children are not fully immunised by 4 years 1 month.
- Providers may see an increase in the number of children presenting for immunisation at 4 years 1 month of age due to parents being ineligible to receive their childcare rebate until the child is fully immunised.

What can providers do?

It has been recommended that children receive their 4 year old vaccines at the age of 4 years since May 2000. In South Australia, most parents present for immunisation during the year after their child turns 4, most commonly just before the child starts school at 5 years of age. *In the southern region, June 2008 data showed that 2.1% of children were immunised by 4 years and 1 month.*

To prepare for this change providers may wish to:

1. Review the number of children visiting the practice who were born in 2005 by **month** of birth in order to anticipate the number of 4-year-old children requiring vaccination.
2. Consider promoting the 4-year-old Healthy Kids Check to parents in conjunction with the need for the child to receive their vaccines at 4 years of age.
3. Send invitations/birthday cards to children about to turn 4 years old to encourage them to attend as soon as possible after turning 4 for immunisations +/- a Healthy Kids Check.

As parents become aware of the importance of vaccinating their child as close to their 4th birthday as possible, the number of children needing to be recalled for their 4 year old vaccines should decline.