

Information for GPs about Japanese encephalitis virus vaccination

Dear Colleagues,

On 4 March 2022, the Japanese Encephalitis Virus (JEV) situation in Australia was declared a Communicable Disease Incident of National Significance (CDINS), following detection of JEV in animals, and identification of cases in humans, indicating the virus is likely circulating in the mosquito population where it hasn't been found before. ACT Health [wrote to General Practitioners](#) about the situation with advice about testing and prevention on 11 March.

This letter provides further advice about provision of JEV vaccines in the ACT.

Safe and effective vaccines for Japanese encephalitis virus are available in Australia for people aged two months and over. The vaccines are **not** on the National Immunisation Program schedule in Australia but will be funded by the government for the eligible people outlined below.

National JEV Vaccine Priority Groups

Nationally, supplies of the JEV vaccine are being prioritised for those identified to be at highest risk of exposure to JEV, as per nationally agreed priority groups. ACT Health has a supply of JEV vaccines (Imojev and JEspect) for eligible people in the ACT.

The current national priority groups are:

- people who work at, reside at, or have a planned non-deferable visit to a:
 - piggery, including but not limited to farm workers and their families (including children aged 2 months and older) living at the piggery, transport workers, veterinarians and others involved in the care of pigs
 - pork abattoir or pork rendering plant.
- personnel who work directly with mosquitoes through their surveillance (field or laboratory based) or control and management, and indirectly through management of vertebrate mosquito-borne disease surveillance systems (e.g., sentinel animals) such as:
 - environmental health officers and workers (urban and remote)
 - entomologists
- diagnostic and research laboratory workers who may be exposed to the virus, such as persons working with JEV cultures or mosquitoes with the potential to transmit JEV; as per the [Immunisation Handbook](#).

Government funded JEV vaccine stock should **not** be used for people outside of these priority groups, including for people seeking JEV vaccination prior to international travel. For these people, and where JEV vaccination is recommended as per the [Australian Immunisation Handbook](#), please use private vaccine stock.

Please note that these National priority groups may broaden over time. The ACT Health Directorate Public Health Unit will keep you updated on any changes. The current priority groups are available on the [Australian Department of Health JEV vaccine website](#).

JEV Vaccine Information

Imojev is a live attenuated vaccine and is given as a single dose and recommended for use in people aged 9 months and over. Imojev is **not** suitable:

- For people who are immunocompromised
- During pregnancy
- For infants aged less than 9 months

The JEV vaccine schedule for Imojev is provided below:

Age at vaccination	Vaccine	Number of doses	Booster
≥9 months to <18 years	Imojev	1 dose	1–2 years after primary dose if ongoing risk of JE virus exposure
≥18 years	Imojev	1 dose	Not required

JEspect is an inactivated vaccine and is given as 2 doses, either 28 days apart, or 7 days apart in adults if they are at risk of immediate exposure to the virus. It is recommended for use in people aged 2 months and over, and is suitable for people who are immunocompromised, and for pregnant people.

The JEV vaccine schedule for JEspect is provided below:

Age at vaccination	Vaccine	Number of doses	Booster	Notes
≥2 months to <18 years	JEspect	2 doses (28 days apart)	No recommendation	Each dose of JEspect in infants and children aged ≥2 months to <3 years is 0.25 mL. There are no data to inform recommendations for booster doses in infants and children <18 years. Consider a booster if the child needs sustained protection.
≥18 years	JEspect	2 doses (28 days apart)	1–2 years after primary dose if ongoing risk of JE virus exposure	Adults can receive an accelerated primary course of JEspect (2 × 0.5 mL doses, 7 days apart) if they are at imminent risk of exposure to JE virus.

For further information about JEV vaccine choice, doses for children, route of administration, contraindications, precautions, and booster dose recommendations, please refer to:

- [Australian Immunisation Handbook](#)
- [Australian Department of Health JEV vaccine website](#)

Information for priority groups

People in the priority groups in the ACT, will be sent a letter from ACT Health through their employer, advising them to make an appointment with their General Practitioner or an identified practice (see below) to receive JEV vaccination. They will be asked to take their letter to their appointment.

There may be a small number of eligible people in the ACT who don't receive a letter. If a patient requests JEV vaccination and has not received a letter from ACT Health, assess whether the patient is eligible to receive government funded JEV vaccine, as per the [current national priority groups](#).

There are three practices in the ACT that have been provided with pre-placed JEV vaccine stock to streamline vaccine delivery and provide options for access to the vaccine. These are:

- Travel Doctor – TMVC Canberra – Canberra City, 6222 2300
- Dickson Medical and Travel Clinic – Dickson, 6257 3853
- Ochre Medical Centre Tuggeranong Square – Greenway, 6175 0400

Supply of JEV vaccine will be provided on an as-needed basis to other practices in the ACT.

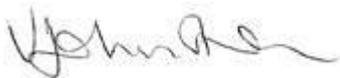
What you need to do

If a patient requests JEV vaccination (regardless of whether or not they have received a letter from ACT Health), assess whether the patient is eligible to receive government funded JEV vaccine, as per the [current national priority groups](#). If eligible:

- Complete Part A of the [Order Form for JEV Vaccine](#) (attached) and return it to immunisation@act.gov.au or fax on 5124 9307.
- The Health Protection Service Immunisation Unit will organise delivery of the vaccine to your practice within two working days. Delivery will only occur between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday (excluding public holidays). Please allow for this when booking a follow-up appointment for vaccine administration. Should there be any issues with delivery, the Immunisation Unit will advise your practice of this.
- The vaccine will be in a clear see-through bag and labelled with the patient's name.
- The Order Form for JEV will be returned to your practice with the vaccine. When the vaccine is administered, please complete Part C of the form, and return the completed form to the Immunisation Unit by email or fax on the same day.

Should you have any questions about the delivery process for JEV vaccine, or about the JEV national priority groups please refer to the ACT Health JEV webpage (<https://www.health.act.gov.au/jev>) or contact the Immunisation Unit on 5124 9800.

Yours sincerely



Dr Vanessa Johnston

Deputy Chief Health Officer

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