

Obtaining Consent

Valid consent can be defined as the voluntary agreement by an individual to a proposed procedure, given after appropriate and reliable information about the procedure, including the potential risks and benefits, have been conveyed to the individual.

- For consent to be legally valid, the following elements must be present:
 - It must be given by a person with legal capacity, and of sufficient intellectual capacity to understand the implications of being vaccinated.
 - It must be given voluntarily.
 - It can only be given after the relevant vaccines and their potential risks and benefits have been explained to the individual.
 - The individual must have sufficient opportunity to seek further details or explanations about the vaccine(s) and/or their administration.
- Consent should be obtained before each vaccination once it has been established that there are no medical conditions that contraindicate vaccination.
- In general, a parent or legal guardian of a child has the authority to consent to vaccination of the child. Should a child or adolescent refuse vaccinations for which a parent/guardian has given consent, the child's wishes should be respected and the parent/guardian informed.
- A responsible adult family member, preferably with authority to make medical decisions, may give consent for vaccination of an adult with a significant disability. For example, this may occur for influenza vaccination of an elderly person with dementia.
- Plain language should be used in communicating information about vaccines and their use to an individual.
- The individual must be allowed to ask for further information and have time to make a decision about whether to consent or not.
- It is preferable that printed information is available to supplement any verbal explanations.
 - The summary table, "Comparison of the effects of diseases and the side effects of vaccines".
 - More information concerning vaccines and their use is available from: Immunise Australia website: www.immunise.health.gov.au.
 - The National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance website: www.ncirs.usyd.edu.au includes fact sheets related to specific vaccines, vaccine-preventable diseases and vaccine safety.
- Consent may be given either in writing or verbally but must be legally valid.
- Evidence of valid consent should be documented in the clinical records.
- If a standard procedure is routinely followed in a practice or clinic, then a stamp, a sticker or a providers signature indicating that the routine procedure has been followed, may be used.
- Consent is often given and recorded at the first vaccination visit. Explicit verbal consent is required prior to subsequent vaccinations even when written consent has been given at previous vaccination encounters.