

Outfox mpox

Mpox (formerly known as monkeypox) is spreading locally in Victoria. Victoria is currently experiencing its largest mpox outbreak, with 80 cases of mpox recorded this year compared to just eight cases for all of 2023.

What is mpox?

Mpox, caused by the monkeypox virus, is a viral infection that spreads through sex and close physical contact. The virus usually results in a mild illness however, symptoms can last for several weeks and can be severe and require hospitalisation.

Symptoms of mpox

- a rash on or near the genitals or near the anus, or on other parts of the body such as the hands, feet, chest, face, or inside of the mouth
- enlarged lymph nodes
- fever
- chills
- headache
- muscle aches.

The Western Public Health Unit has three key messages for the community to help protect yourself against mpox:



Get vaccinated

One of the best ways to protect yourself against mpox and severe disease from mpox is to get vaccinated. For optimal protection get your first dose as soon as possible and then a second dose at least 28 days after the first dose.



Practice safe sex

Limiting the number of sexual partners can reduce your risk of exposure to mpox also, keeping a list of sexual partners and their contact details to assist local public health units with contact tracing.



Get tested

If you notice symptoms of mpox, particularly if you develop a rash, seek medical advice and get tested at your GP or Melbourne Sexual Health Centre.

For more information on mpox, the mpox vaccine and where to find your local mpox vaccination clinic and the current mpox outbreak in Victoria, go to the Western Public Health Unit website - www.wphu.org.au/health-topics/mpox/



It's annual flu vaccine time



The Western Public Health Unit recommends a flu vaccine for everyone aged six months and older. Flu vaccine is a safe and effective way to reduce the chance of getting the flu, which can be a severe infection.

People at higher risk of severe flu can receive a free vaccine from their GP or pharmacy. This includes:

- people aged 65 years and older
- children aged six months to under five years
- pregnant women (at any stage of pregnancy)
- First nations people aged six months and older
- people aged six months and older with a medical condition that puts them at higher risk of severe illness from flu.

How to get the flu vaccine?

Flu vaccines are available through GPs or pharmacies. Find one near you using Health Direct Service Finder -

www.healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services and enter the search term "influenza" or "flu".



Scan the QR code to access Health Direct Service Finder to find a GP or pharmacy near you to book your flu vaccine.

COVID vaccination

COVID is in our communities all year round but can be particularly common and easily spread in winter.

Keeping your COVID vaccinations up to date is important to stay well this winter. The COVID vaccine helps your body fight the virus and protects you from getting really sick, being taken to hospital, or dying from COVID.

For more information on COVID vaccines go to, www.wphu.org.au/health-topics/covid-19

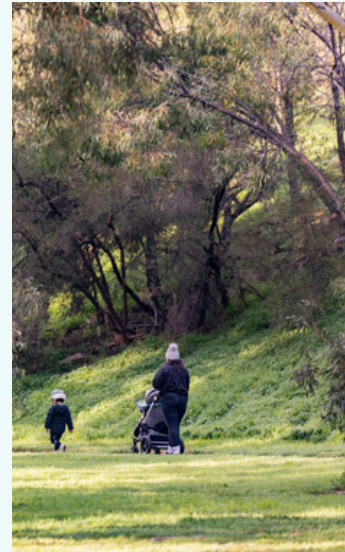


Climate change and health

Climate change is a change in the world's weather systems that occurs over decades. Most of the recent changes in our climate have been brought about by human activity. These changes will have significant consequences for our health, wellbeing and safety.

The effects of climate change include increasing air and sea temperatures, changes in rainfall patterns, more frequent and increasingly severe extreme weather events and sea level rise.

Climate change may affect our health and wellbeing through the impacts of extreme events, worsening air quality, changes in the spread of infectious diseases, threats to food and water quality and quantity, as well as affect our mental health.



There are things we can all do now to build our resilience to the effects of climate change and help slow its pace, such as:



- using active transport, for example walking or cycling



- eating a diet rich in plant-based foods, including fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds and whole grains, and fewer animal-based foods is good for your health and the environment



- drinking tap water over bottled water or sugary drinks is better for your health and the environment, and it's a lot cheaper too



- using less packaging by taking your own bags or packing your food in re-usable containers.

Look after your mental health

Aside from its effects on physical health, climate change may adversely affect the mental health of many Australians. Extreme weather events such as floods, droughts and bushfires can lead to psychological distress due to trauma, illness, loss of loved ones, destruction of property and displacement, and disruption of communities, goods and services.

Getting help and support for mental health issues early can make a big difference to getting the right treatment or assistance for your needs.

More information on getting help for mental health can be found on the Better Health Channel - www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/health/servicesandsupport/getting-help-for-a-mental-illness





Vaping conversation guide for parents

While smoking rates have substantially reduced in recent decades, growth in e-cigarette use (commonly known as vaping) presents a significant public health challenge, particularly among adolescents and young people.

Evidence suggests that e-cigarettes may contain nicotine levels equivalent to 20 cigarettes, and vaping is the single strongest risk factor for Victorian adolescents to take up tobacco smoking.

This Vaping conversation guide for parents - www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/resources/resource-download/vaping-conversation-guide-parents can help you have a meaningful, non-threatening conversation with your teen about vaping.

You can also talk to a Quitline counsellor about any vaping concerns and get advice on what you can do as a parent or carer, or how to start a conversation with your teen on vaping. Quitline is a warm, welcoming, confidential and free counselling service. **Find out how to contact Quitline at www.quit.org.au.**

By youth, for youth - Melton City Council's anti-vaping campaign

Melton City Council and Western Health Community Health have co-designed a local vaping prevention campaign, designed by youth, for youth in their municipality and beyond.

To address vaping misinformation, this campaign aims to increase children and young peoples' knowledge and awareness of vaping harms. The campaign materials highlight the dangerous chemicals in vapes and the impact of these on young people's health.

To learn more and to access the resources visit - <https://www.wphu.org.au/by-youth-for-youth-melton-city-councils-vaping-prevention-campaign/>



Preventing cervical cancer is in your hands



Cervical cancer is one of the most preventable and treatable cancers, if found early. Almost all cases of cervical cancer are caused by human papillomavirus (HPV), a very common virus spread through sexual contact.

A cervical screening test (which replaced the pap test) looks for HPV. Finding HPV early gives you the best protection against cervical cancer.

If you are a person with a cervix aged 25 to 74, it is recommended that you do a cervical screening test every five years, even if you don't have any symptoms.

You have a choice for your next cervical screening test. You can have the test done by a doctor or nurse, or you can conduct the test yourself, using a small swab. This is done in a private space at a healthcare clinic, usually behind a curtain or in a bathroom.

Self-collection is quick, easy, private and just as accurate as a test done by a doctor or nurse.

Find out more about cervical screening and self-collection option at - <https://cancervic.org.au/cervical>

