

# Children not immunised due to socioeconomic barriers

August 6 2015, by Kate Bourne

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Almost one in 10 Australian infants are at risk of severe infections because they are not up-to-date with their immunisations. According to new research at the University of Adelaide, infants from socially disadvantaged backgrounds are at greater risk of not being fully immunised.

The study, conducted in [conjunction](#) with University College London, examined barriers to childhood immunisations experienced by [parents](#) in Australia.

Researchers found 91% of [infants](#) were up-to-date with immunisations but [children](#) with socioeconomically disadvantaged parents, not just parents who disagree with immunisations, were more likely to not be fully immunised. The research was published in the journal *Vaccine*.

Associate Professor Helen Marshall, from the University of Adelaide's Robinson Research Institute, and Director of Vaccinology and Immunology Research Trials Unit at the Women's and Children's Hospital, says this is the first Australia-wide study to show that factors associated with social disadvantage impact on immunisation uptake more than unwillingness to have children immunised.

"In this study we looked at the most current individual-level data available of more than 5,000 Australian children, aged 3-19 months," says Associate Professor Marshall.

"9.3% of children were found to be partially immunised or not immunised at all, and of these only one in six children had parents who disagreed with immunisations. So the majority of infants who were incompletely immunised had parents who do not object to immunisation – something else is getting in the way," she says.

According to Associate Professor Marshall, the primary barriers to immunisation included minimal contact with, and access to services, being a single parent and children living in a large household.

"Socioeconomic disadvantage was an important reason why parents had children who were either partially immunised or not immunised at all," says Associate Professor Marshall.

"Children with chronic medical conditions were also more likely not to be up-to-date with immunisations. This is possibly due to parents and health care providers having a lack of knowledge about additional vaccines that are recommended for children with certain medical conditions or concerns vaccines may have adverse effects in these children," she says.

Associate Professor Marshall says these findings can inform programs to increase the uptake of immunisations.

"Reminders and rescheduling of cancelled appointments, and offering immunisation in different settings may help achieve better protection for children and the community," says Associate Professor Marshall.

"This research found that the majority of parents with partially immunised children are in favour of vaccinations, so we need to look at how we can remove the barriers experienced by these families," she says.

Provided by University of Adelaide

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