



Community Health Nursing in Secondary Schools

Who are community health nurses in schools?

Community health nurses in schools play a vital role in linking the important areas of education and health.

Often referred to as school health nurses, they are registered nurses employed by the Child and Adolescent Health Service (CAHS) and WA Country Health Service (WACHS).

They work together with the Department of Education, young people, parents, care givers, schools and other organisations to support and promote the health and wellbeing of students from Kindy all the way through to Year 12.



What does a school health nurse do?

School health nurses (Secondary School – for young people in Years 7 to 12).

School health nurses in high schools are mostly based in schools. They provide information and support to staff, students and parents on adolescent development and healthy growth that includes:

- health education to groups and classes
- providing brief interventions and access to care
- mental health and wellbeing support
- supporting the [School Based Immunisation Program](#) on their visits to schools, sharing information about why immunisations are important, and working with schools and families to collect and safely store immunisation consent data
- providing non-judgmental information that helps build coping skills and resilience
- referrals to appropriate external services if required further assessment or intervention
- helping with health care plans for students with identified or chronic health needs.

School Based Immunisation Program

This nationally funded free program offers protection against several vaccine-preventable diseases. It is a free service provided to all Year 7 and Year 10 students through the school they attend.

Immunisation information is recorded on the Australian Immunisation Register. We can help add a student to the AIR if they were born outside Australia.

Parents, carers or young people need to provide their consent and they can do this either online or download the form at [School-based immunisation program \(healthywa.wa.gov.au\)](#). The downloadable consent form must be used for young people in the care of Department of Communities.

The vaccines provided through the program include:

Year 7

- Human papillomavirus (HPV) and diphtheria-tetanus-whooping cough vaccine
 - Your child will need one dose of each vaccine during Year 7
 - If your child has a condition affecting their immune system, you may need more than one dose of HPV

Year 10

- Meningococcal ACWY vaccine

For more information, please email CAHS.CHSBIP@health.wa.gov.au. Remember to include your child's name, year group and school.

Working with schools

At the request of teachers, and if time allows, a school health nurse may provide advice and support for some areas of curriculum delivery. However, the teacher is responsible for session planning and overall content and will always be present in the classroom when the nurse is involved.

Principals are responsible for development of first aid procedures including emergency responses. A school health nurse can assist within a range of skills, knowledge and availability.

When to see a school health nurse?

The school health nurse is available to talk to about anything. School health nurses support young people, staff, parents and caregivers across a wide range of physical and mental health issues and concerns that include:

- mental health and wellbeing issues (stress, anxiety and depression)
- physical health (ongoing illness, sleeping and eating issues, physical activity, body changes)
- sexual health (contraception and pregnancy advice, respectful relationships, assertive communication, LGBTQIA+ support, STIs)
- friendships and families (bullying, fitting in, feeling alone)
- relationships (sexual health, respectful relationships, assertive communication, LGBTQIA+ support)
- drinking, smoking, vaping and other drug use (partying, social influence/influencing pressure, risk taking)

Confidentiality and information sharing

Like all health professionals, school health nurses keep information confidential (private). They generally cannot share information without the student's consent (permission). However, school health nurses have a responsibility to report concerns including if a young person is:

- thinking about hurting themselves
- someone is hurting them
- they want to hurt someone else.

In special cases, such as where a young person is living with a condition that impacts on their capacity to consent, the nurse needs consent from the young person's legal guardian (usually a parent) to share information.

Refugee Health Team

The Refugee Health Team supports newly arrived refugees and humanitarian entrants to connect with community and specialist health care services. They provide services across the Perth metropolitan area.

The team of nurses help families to identify health concerns and refers them to other health services for continuing care. Find out more about the [Refugee Health Team](https://cahs.health.wa.gov.au) at cahs.health.wa.gov.au.

Language Services

School health nurses can use interpreters and/or translators to share information in preferred languages when needed. This may include:

- organising in-language or Auslan interpreters for over the phone, in-person or online appointments
- resources to support young people and their parents and carers understand different health topics.

Bedwetting Program

CACH's Bedwetting Program (also known as Nocturnal Enuresis), is a child/adolescent-centred program delivered by a team of nurses across the Perth metropolitan area. Your child/young person will need to be referred by your family doctor or other appropriate medical practitioner.

The program is offered to all children and young people who meet the following criteria:

- aged 5½ to 18 years
- adequate family/carer support to engage with the program
- daytime urine and bowel continence (control)
- no ongoing issues relating to constipation or other comorbidities (medical conditions)
- a bedwetting pattern of more than twice weekly

Find out more about the [Bedwetting Program](https://cahs.health.wa.gov.au) at cahs.health.wa.gov.au.

How to contact a school health nurse

You can contact your child's school health nurse through the school office. In some high schools, they are a part of the Student Services team.

More information on school health nurses

Visit [School Health](https://cahs.health.wa.gov.au) at cahs.health.wa.gov.au.

Urgent advice

CAMHS Crisis Connect 1800 048 636

www.cahs.health.wa.gov.au/CAMHSCrisisConnect

Free 24/7 urgent mental health support, advice and assessment for children and young people.

Kids Helpline 1800 551 800

www.kidshelpline.com.au

Free confidential 24/7 online and phone counselling service for young people aged 5 to 25.

Health Direct 1800 022 222

www.healthdirect.gov.au

Free 24/7 health advice.

Raising Children Network

www.raisingchildren.net.au

Australian parenting advice website.