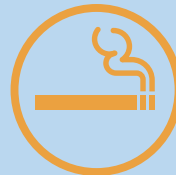


A child's state of health is closely linked to their mothers' health, as well as socioeconomic factors including poverty, housing and employment status, family violence; and whether a person is from a vulnerable community such as rural/remote, indigenous, culturally diverse, or children living in Out of Home Care.

### CHILDREN IN GIPPSLAND

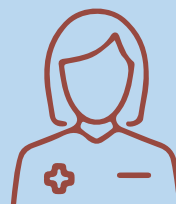
- **97%** of 5 year old children are fully immunised (Indigenous 95.9%; Victoria 96.1%)
- **17.8%** population aged 0-14 years
- **17.1** Child FIRST assessments per 1,000 eligible population (Victoria 10.1 per 1,000)
- **19.8** child protection substantiations per 1,000 eligible population (Victoria 11.4 per 1,000)
- **28.8%** children in low income, welfare-dependent families (Victoria 19.3%)
- **24.1%** developmentally vulnerable on one or more domains at school entry (Victoria 19.9%)
- **14.2%** developmentally vulnerable on two or more domain at school entry (Victoria 10.1%)
- Low rate of antibiotic dispensing for children 9 years or younger: 58-81 per 1,000 (age standardised rate) (Victoria 93 per 1,000)
- **10.7%** estimated number of children aged 2-17 years who are obese (Victoria 8%)
- **17.4%** children with speech and language problems at school entry (Victoria 14.2%).



**16.7%** of mothers reported smoking during first 20 weeks of pregnancy (Australia 9.1%)



**60.3%** infants fully breastfed at 3 months (Victoria 63.4%)



**94.9%** of women who gave birth attended 5 or more antenatal visits (Australia 94.7%)

### GENERAL PRACTICE DATA

#### The top five diagnoses/reasons for doctor visits for children aged 0-14 years in 2020-21 were:

- Immunisation (17.9%)
- Otitis media (11.1%)
- Viral upper respiratory tract infection (9.8%)
- Asthma (9.2%)
- Upper respiratory tract infection (8.8%)

#### 6.0% of children aged 0-14 years recorded a mental health diagnosis

- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder was the most common mental health diagnosis (43.1%), anxiety was the second most common (20.4%)

#### The top five referrals for children aged 0-14 years were for:

- Paediatrics (30.6%)
- ENT (11.2%)
- Hospital/emergency department (10.9%)
- Psychology (8.2%)
- Orthopaedics (5.5%)



## BARRIERS TO ACCESSING HEALTH CARE FOR CHILDREN

PAEDIATRIC  
WORKFORCE  
AND SERVICE  
SHORTAGES

COMPLEXITY  
OF THE  
SYSTEM

DISCRIMINATION  
/ STIGMA

FEAR OF  
REFERRAL TO  
CHILD  
PROTECTION

COST AND  
ACCESS/  
TRANSPORT

KNOWLEDGE,  
SKILLS AND  
ACCESS TO  
DIGITAL HEALTH  
RESOURCES

## ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER CHILDREN

Key issues include access to culturally inclusive health services and places for healing, ear health, gestational diabetes, low birthweight babies, infant mortality rates, breast feeding rates, dietary issues, Foetal alcohol syndrome, tooth decay.

## HEALTH ISSUES IMPORTANT TO PARENTS/CARERS OF CHILDREN

- child mental health and suicide
- bullying
- rising screen time
- decreasing physical activity and poor diets
- illegal drug use
- family violence
- child neglect
- immunisation
- safe environment

## CHILDREN WITH DISABILITY

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) symptoms are evident from early childhood, however not always diagnosed during childhood.

- 1,641 Individuals in Gippsland diagnosed with ASD who are active National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) participants
- 2094 total patients with active autism diagnosis in 2020

### Challenges:

- A lack of awareness of ASD on the part of health professionals, especially General Practitioners
- Difficulties accessing diagnostic services and paediatrician due to high demand and cost
- Complexity of system
- Lack of services in rural and regional areas
- Poor understanding of ASD in culturally and linguistically diverse communities and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

## IMPACT OF COVID-19

The Victorian Commission for Children and Young People consulted with more than 600 children and young people, and with more than 170 workers from 70 organisations supporting them. Homes have also become workplaces and education settings, increasing tension and anxiety for some children and families.

Workers in organisations supporting children and young people are concerned there are 'fewer eyes on kids', with some perceiving the risks faced by vulnerable children and young people during lockdown as outweighing COVID-19.

## SERVICE GAPS/IMPROVEMENTS

- Compounding financial stress, needing a preventive/early intervention approach.
- Increase access to parenting support
- Access to early intervention and early psychoses services
- Not enough Autism Spectrum Disorder services
- Access to Child Mental health services
- Support for children playing a caring role
- Hearing health services with workers with Indigenous Australian and culturally diverse backgrounds
- Access to local cancer support services
- Access to paediatric specialist and integrated allied health services
- Better communications and integration within and between services, including wrap around service models
- More comprehensive screening antenatally of alcohol use
- Cultural literacy and culturally sensitive practice
- Greater use of trauma informed practice and family centred practice
- Greater considerations given to health literacy of consumers
- Absence of gender dysphoria services at a critical time in child/youth development
- Improved links and protocols between state-wide and regional services
- Improved transition from paediatric to adults service systems .

## GIPPSLAND PHN PROGRAMS

- Access to evidence based mental health services and wellbeing support programs.  
<https://gphn.org.au/what-we-do/programs/mental-health-care-and-suicide-prevention/>
- Access to quality, evidence based education and training in child health for GPs, allied health and other professionals.
- Support GPs and other immunisation providers to achieve target immunisation rates.
- Gippsland HealthPathways has a child health suite of pathways which consists of 29 clinical pathways and associated referral pages have been developed covering child mental health and other clinical conditions  
<https://gippsland.healthpathways.org.au/11973.htm> to support patient care in Gippsland