

Early Years Great Careers

Grow. Lead. Succeed.



What do maternal and child health nurses do?

Maternal and child health nurses can work in local government, parenting centres and community health services. They provide individual care and monitoring and run educational programs to assist parents and enable them to develop supportive social networks.

Maternal and child health nurses support the health and development of children from birth until school age and their parents. They:

- Monitor children’s health.
- Support maternal health and wellbeing.
- Identify health and development concerns early.
- Provide intervention and referral when necessary.
- Deliver health promotion and education programs.
- Provide parenting support.

Fast facts

- Nursing is a skills shortage area. The unemployment rate for school and maternal and child health nurses is below 1 per cent.
- More than 93 per cent of Registered Nursing graduates get a job; much higher than the average for all Bachelor degree graduates.

- Maternal and child health nurse salaries begin at \$79,870 a year and will increase with experience depending on role and responsibilities. (Source: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, School and Maternal and Child Health Line Salary Scale, Nurse Category 4b)

Future employment rating ★★★★★

*Future employment growth 11% PA or more. Source: DEEWR

What should I study at school?

Useful subjects include English, maths, biology, chemistry, health and human development and VET Certificate III in Health Services Assistance.

What should I study at university?

To practice in Victoria, maternal and child health nurses must be registered with the Australian Health Practitioner Registration Authority (AHPRA) and:

- be a Division 1 Registered Nurse
- be a Registered Midwife
- hold a Postgraduate Diploma in Community Child Health.

Before starting maternal and child health studies, at least one year’s experience as a midwife is preferable. Midwives have traditionally undertaken a three-year

university degree in nursing and then completed a postgraduate qualification in midwifery to be eligible for registration. More recently, three-year university degrees in midwifery and double degrees have commenced in Victoria.

Suitable qualifications include:

- Bachelor of Nursing** (three years)
- Bachelor of Nursing/Bachelor of Midwifery** (four years)
- Postgraduate studies in nursing** (depending on interest/area of specialisation)

Pathways are available from:

- Diploma of Nursing (Enrolled Nurse/Division 2)**
- Certificate IV Enrolled Nurse (Division 2 Nurse)**
- Diploma of Nursing (Enrolled Nurse/Division 2)**
- Certificate II/III Health Streams**

What are my other career and leadership options?

Other options for qualified maternal and child health nurses include government policy and academic roles. Leadership opportunities could include maternal and child health team leader or coordinator, or children, youth and families services manager.

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Fiona Ryan Maternal and child
health nurse with the City of Melbourne

What are your major qualifications?

General nursing and midwifery training, Bachelor of Nursing (Post-Registration), Postgraduate Diploma of Nursing Science in Family Child and Health.

How long have you worked in early childhood and in your current role?

I worked as a midwife for 12 years before doing a Postgraduate Diploma to practice as a maternal and child health (MCH) nurse. I have been a MCH nurse in local government for 10 years.

What is a typical day?

My role includes working with families with children from birth to school age. The MCH service provides consultations offering evidence-based activities for the 10 key ages and stages visits, with an emphasis on health promotion for maternal and child health and wellbeing.

My role includes conducting a developmental assessment and providing health promotion information based on key health messages, including immunisation, nutrition, oral health, communication, language and play and kindergarten enrolment.

I conduct interventions including a SIDS risk assessment, QUIT smoking support and screening for maternal health and family violence. I also run new parent groups and give immunisations.

What do you enjoy most about your career?

I really enjoy getting to know the family and travelling with them on their journey, watching their confidence grow and develop. It is also lovely when they go on and have more children.

I also enjoy working with families from different cultural backgrounds. I learn a lot from them as they have experiences, beliefs and values that sometimes challenge me. I have learned to respect and support them while imparting the information and guidance required of my role.

Working with vulnerable families is a challenge that I enjoy. It is always rewarding to help families experiencing difficulties.

What is the best experience you have had as an early childhood professional?

My role involves working with families to achieve healthy outcomes. When a family is struggling or a child is not meeting developmental milestones I will refer them to an appropriate support.

The parents of a child I saw at the two year consultation were concerned about his language development. A screening test indicated some development concerns and I referred the family to a developmental paediatrician and to an Early Childhood Intervention Service.

This child had a full paediatric review and received support with his language, social and emotional development.

There was a good outcome – he was able to communicate properly and attend mainstream services such as kindergarten and school.

What would you say to others who might be considering a career in early childhood?

Working with small children and their families is very rewarding. I feel privileged that families allow me to work with them.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years' time?

I plan to study again and do my Masters, most likely in Health Promotion or Public Health. This will enable me to take up a leadership role in the future.

Want to know more?

education.vic.gov.au/earlyyearscareers
education.vic.gov.au/childhood
deewr.gov.au
myfuture.edu.au
joboutlook.gov.au



All indicative salaries in the document are gross before tax a year for full time employees. Salaries will vary depending on employer, role and Award.

Information regarding course and professional pre-requisites is of a general nature. Please consult a career practitioner and/or check with individual institutions to confirm specific course requirements.