



Guidance for online delivery - INFANT group sessions

INFANT is an evidence-based program that shows we can, through supportive education and skills development, positively influence healthy eating and active play behaviours in both parents and their children across the first years of life. INFANT consists of four face-to-face sessions for first-time parents with content reinforced via a mobile app for parents called My Baby Now. These four age-appropriate 90-minute sessions are run approximately every three months until the infant is 12 months old.

In an increasingly online world and with COVID-19 restrictions, the ability to run face-to-face sessions may be limited. The aim of this document is to provide best practice guidance to areas who plan to offer INFANT sessions online if face-to-face sessions are not feasible/permited.

What makes INFANT effective at changing behaviours and improving health?

As a research trial, INFANT has been proven to improve mothers and children's diets and reduce sedentary time for children, with impacts still evident up to 5 years of age.

INFANT was effective in the trial because of the following strategies:

- used existing social groups (first time parent groups)
- provided social support and interaction in the group
- reinforced key messages at each session
- reinforced key messages between sessions
- used anticipatory guidance
- delivered by a trusted health professional with credible information

The research trial highlighted the importance of the social interaction and the facilitated discussion amongst parents that occurred when meeting face to face. This interaction provides opportunities to support each other through sharing successes and challenges, tips and strategies, while also receiving expert guidance. The evidence on the effectiveness of INFANT is based on face-to-face sessions and we are unsure if delivering the sessions online will produce the same outcome. If online delivery is used it is important to ensure that the sessions remain interactive and include the facilitated discussion components as per the facilitator manual.

When to consider online delivery of INFANT sessions

Face-to-face delivery is the first and preferred option for INFANT sessions given the important role of these sessions in providing a means for social interaction and in-person support.

Online delivery may be an option where:

- COVID-19 restrictions prohibit face-to-face sessions
- travel to venues is not feasible because of remoteness

Required set-up if delivering INFANT sessions online

If you are considering delivering INFANT sessions online, you will need to set up as follows:

1. Use an online platform that allows for facilitator and participant interactions, such as Zoom
2. If using a platform such as Zoom or Teams, set up an invite link and send to participants a few days prior to the scheduled session. On the day, the facilitator should monitor for any issues with participants joining the session. If possible, provide a contact number for participants to use if they are experiencing any issues joining the session.
3. Keep the group sizes to a similar group size as if it were face-to-face (i.e. 8-10 people) and create the same opportunities for social interaction. If it is a larger group, it may be useful to create opportunities for small group interaction (e. g. [zoom breakout groups](#))
4. Follow the same format and content in the facilitator guide for each session
5. Encourage participants to catch up individually and face-to-face where possible (within COVID guidelines/restrictions) between and after INFANT sessions

Troubleshooting challenges when delivering INFANT sessions online

Challenge	Potential solutions
Less engagement online	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make contact before the group begins: send a text/email message to introduce yourself and provide instructions on how to get started. Add a personal touch by including a short video message relaying the same information so they can 'get to know' you
Large group size may be difficult to facilitate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Break into smaller groups for discussion throughout the session and bring back major points to the larger group
Difficulty involving all the participants / Interruptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create an introductory activity • Ask participants to have their first name and baby's name displayed • Divide your content into 5–7-minute segments, then seek input from the participants • Offer a variety of interactions, e.g., lecturing, small group work, open ended questions, guest speaker, visuals • Encourage use of the 'raising their hand' icon when they have a question • Encourage use of the mute button to reduce background noise (eg: crying baby) • Encourage participants to meet between or after the INFANT sessions. Share contact details if they give permission • Encourage participants to use the chat box for additional comments
Technical issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge participants may have limited technical experience and encourage them to contact you for instructions and even to practice • Invite another person to assist you until you feel confident • Have a technician available, if feasible, to contact should you need their assistance