

# FIGHTING FLU STARTS WITH YOU

## Who should receive the influenza vaccine

Everyone six months and older is recommended to get an influenza (flu) vaccine each year. The flu vaccine not only protects you, but it also can help protect those around you.

## Influenza vaccination is especially important for some

The flu vaccine is strongly recommended and free under the National Immunisation Program for people most at risk of complications from influenza, including:

- **People 65 years and over**
- **Pregnant women (at any stage during pregnancy)**
- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 6 months and over**
- **Children 6 months to less than 5 years**
- **People 6 months and over with certain medical conditions**

Some states and territories may offer free vaccines for other groups. Talk to your vaccination provider or visit your state or territory health department website to find out.

If you are not eligible for a free vaccine, you can buy the vaccine. Talk to local vaccination providers to find out how much it will cost.

## About influenza

Influenza is a common viral infection that affects people of all ages.

While it can be a mild disease for some, it can also cause very serious illness in otherwise healthy people. It can lead to hospitalisation and can cause death.

Vaccination is the safest way to protect yourself and others from influenza.

## About the influenza vaccine

Influenza vaccines are given each year to protect against the most common strains of the virus.

The strains can change from year to year so the vaccines may be updated from one season to the next, so it's important to get vaccinated every year.

The vaccine used will depend on your age. Your vaccination provider can tell you which vaccine they will use for you or your child's immunisation.

All National Immunisation Program funded vaccines available for use are quadrivalent (four strains—two influenza A and two influenza B). They are latex free.

## Influenza vaccine safety

The influenza vaccine has been around for many decades and has a great safety record. Common side effects from the influenza vaccine include mild pain, redness or swelling where the vaccine is given. These side effects usually last for a few days and go away without any treatment.

While some effects may seem like influenza, none of the influenza vaccines available in Australia contain live influenza viruses, so they cannot cause influenza.

People with egg allergy (including history of anaphylaxis) can safely receive the NIP flu vaccines. If you have an egg allergy, please discuss this with your vaccination provider.

Serious side effects, such as a severe allergic reaction are extremely rare.

## When to get your influenza vaccine

You should get vaccinated each year from mid-April onwards to be protected before the influenza season, which is usually June to September in most parts of Australia. However, it's never too late to be vaccinated as influenza can spread all year round.

If you had last seasons flu vaccine late last year or early this year, you should still get the new season vaccine this year when it becomes available.

Influenza vaccines can be given on the same day with a COVID-19 vaccines and most other vaccines.

### Where to get your influenza vaccine

You can book a vaccine appointment at a range of health services including:

- local doctor/general practices
- local council immunisation clinics (available in some states and territories)
- community health centres
- Aboriginal health services
- participating pharmacies.

Not all of these vaccination providers will have the free National Immunisation Program vaccines. Check with your preferred vaccination provider to find out:

- about the specific vaccines they can provide
- when they will be available; and
- when you can book in to have the vaccine
- if there is a consultation or administration fee to get the free vaccines.

### Children under 5

Babies and children younger than 5 years have a higher risk of complications and being hospitalised from influenza. Even healthy children can get very sick from influenza.

Your child can get an influenza vaccine either on its own or at the same appointment as their other routine vaccinations.

Children under 9 getting the influenza vaccine for the first time need 2 doses, 4 weeks apart. This strengthens the immune response to all vaccine strains.

### People aged 65 years and over

Vaccination is particularly important for people aged 65 years and over as they are at high risk of complications from influenza.

All adults aged 65 and over are eligible for a free influenza vaccine that is specifically made to boost the immune response for better protection.

### The Australian Immunisation Register

Your immunisation provider is required to report all influenza vaccinations to the Register. This includes some personal information such as your name, date of birth, contact details, and your Medicare card number.



Ask about the flu vaccine today

[health.gov.au/flu](https://health.gov.au/flu)

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are more at risk of getting really sick and going to hospital from influenza.

For protection of your community, everyone aged 6 months and over can get the influenza vaccine for free every year.

### Pregnant women

Influenza is a serious disease for pregnant women and their babies. The influenza vaccine is recommended, safe and free for every pregnancy and can be given at any stage during pregnancy. It can also be safely given while breastfeeding.

Changes to immune, heart and lung functions during pregnancy make pregnant women more vulnerable to severe illness and complications from influenza.

By getting vaccinated in pregnancy, you pass on protective antibodies through the placenta to your baby. This protects them in their first few months when they are most vulnerable and are too young to be vaccinated themselves.

Pregnant women who had last year's influenza vaccine early in their pregnancy, are recommended to have the current influenza vaccine if it is available before their baby is born.

If you received the vaccine before becoming pregnant, you should be revaccinated during pregnancy to protect your unborn infant.

Influenza vaccination can be given at the same time as pertussis vaccine and/or COVID-19 vaccine.

### People with certain medical conditions

The influenza vaccine is free for people 6 months and over with the following conditions that put them at higher risk of severe influenza and its complications:

- cardiac disease
- chronic respiratory conditions
- chronic neurological conditions
- immunocompromising conditions
- diabetes and other metabolic disorders
- renal disease
- haematological disorders
- children aged six months to 10 years on long term aspirin therapy.

Talk to your vaccination provider about your medical history and ask if you are at risk.



All information in this publication is correct as of February 2023.