

9 May 2022

Victorian school age children's parents

**Re: Encouragement to vaccinate your children before winter / flu season.**

Dear parents,

With winter just around the corner, now is the right time to consider vaccinating your children against both the common flu and COVID-19.

It is not surprising that some of you may be feeling 'vaccine fatigued' after two years-worth of pandemic and efforts to raise Australia's COVID vaccination levels. However, we must remember the reasons why getting eligible children vaccinated is so important. It is not only for the purpose of protecting your children against COVID-19 or influenza, it's about protecting those around you, your loved ones, and community; particularly those who are more at-risk of severe symptoms.

Luckily, many children who are exposed to COVID-19 may not experience serious symptoms, however, this is not the case for all. Some children are at risk of becoming very sick and facing both short and long-term health complications. Those with underlying medical conditions such as asthma or diabetes are particularly vulnerable.

Getting your children vaccinated will not only help them to stay healthy and protect their schoolmates but will help schools to stay open and be able to continue coordinating outings and events that the students all look forward to.

The pandemic has led to decreased exposure to the flu. But with an end to certain COVID-19 rules and restrictions, and with state and international borders open, a resurgence of influenza is expected in the coming months, prompting warnings of a potentially monster flu season ahead. Children born from the start of the pandemic in 2020 are likely to have had no exposure to the influenza virus in their lifetime, meaning it's more important than ever to ensure they are protected. In 2019 there were 953 influenza related deaths in Australia. Unfortunately, we are already starting to see cases in some parts of the country.

The annual Influenza vaccine is recommended for everyone aged six months or older. It is free under the National Immunisation Program for children aged 6-months to 5-years, adults 65 years and over, pregnant women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and people with certain medical conditions.

We encourage you to be proactive and get yourselves and your children vaccinated against both COVID-19 and the flu as soon as possible. Check your GP practice's website or have a chat with your usual GP or nurse at your next visit to find out when the flu and COVID-19 vaccines will be available to you next, and book your family in.

If you or your children struggle with needles, please rest assured GPs and practice nurses have a great deal of training behind them to help people with needle phobia and will make the experience as comfortable as possible. If you or your child have any concerns, we encourage you to let the person administering your vaccinations know.

Yours sincerely



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Chair – RACGP Victoria Faculty Council