

**DON'T TAKE THE  
RISK THIS SEASON**  
**GET THE FLU VACCINE.**



The **INFLUENZA** vaccine is recommended for anyone aged 6 months and over and provided **FREE** for those most at risk from influenza and its complications.

Ask about the influenza vaccine today.

[health.gov.au/immunisation](http://health.gov.au/immunisation)



## **What is influenza?**

Influenza is a highly contagious viral infection that causes widespread illness and deaths every year.

Influenza viruses usually spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes. People may spread the virus before they know they are infected.

Symptoms usually come on suddenly and may include:

- fever (high temperature)
- cough
- muscle or body aches
- fatigue (tiredness)
- headaches
- sore throat
- runny or stuffy nose

Influenza infection is more serious in pregnant women, babies, older people, and people with chronic health conditions such as heart, lung or kidney diseases, or weakened immune systems.

However, even fit and healthy people, especially children, can get very sick from influenza. Influenza can cause a serious infection in the lungs and can make chronic health conditions worse. Some people can even die from influenza and its complications.

## **The influenza vaccine**

Vaccination is our best defence against influenza viruses. Even fit and healthy people should get the influenza vaccine to protect themselves and help to stop the spread of influenza.

Influenza vaccination prepares your immune system to fight influenza viruses. The influenza vaccine uses parts of killed viruses to create an immune response following vaccination. The immunity provided by the vaccine can protect you from becoming sick if you get exposed to influenza in the community. This immunity can also reduce the severity of illness if you do get sick.

The influenza vaccine cannot give you influenza because it does not contain any live viruses.

## **Vaccination is the safest way to protect yourself and others from influenza viruses**

The influenza vaccine 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.

Any medicine, including influenza vaccines, can have potentially serious side effects, such as a severe allergic reaction. However, the likelihood of these reactions is extremely rare.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **Q: Do I need to get vaccinated again if I was vaccinated last year?**

*Yes. Every year the World Health Organization makes recommendations about the influenza virus strains to be included in the vaccine. This usually results in a changed vaccine every year to protect against the types of influenza viruses that are expected to be most common that year.*

#### **Q: When should I get vaccinated?**

*Getting vaccinated from April every year gives you the best protection in time for the peak influenza period (usually from June to September in most parts of Australia).*

#### **Q: How long after vaccination does the vaccine take to start providing protection?**

*It takes up to two weeks for the vaccine to start providing protection after vaccination.*

#### **Q: Can I get vaccinated if I have an egg allergy?**

*Yes. People with an egg allergy, even an anaphylactic egg allergy, can safely have the influenza vaccine. Make sure you let your GP or other immunisation provider know that you have an egg allergy.*

#### **Q: I know that sometimes people can get influenza even when they have been vaccinated—why does this happen?**

*The influenza vaccine, like all vaccines, is not 100% effective. This means that even when people are vaccinated against influenza, there is a chance they can still get infected. It is important to remember that influenza vaccination reduces the chance of getting influenza and may also reduce the seriousness of illness if people do get infected with the virus.*

*The influenza vaccine itself cannot give you influenza because it does not contain any live viruses.*

## Who should receive the influenza vaccine?

**Influenza vaccination is recommended for anyone aged 6 months and over to reduce their chance of getting influenza. People in the following groups are eligible to receive the vaccine for free through the National Immunisation Program:**

- People aged 65 years and over
- Pregnant women (at any stage during pregnancy)
- All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 6 months and over
- All children aged 6 months to less than 5 years\*
- People aged 6 months and over with certain medical conditions that increase their chance of severe influenza and its complications.

*\*In some states and territories, influenza vaccines may also be provided for free to older children. Speak to your GP or visit your state or territory Department of Health website to find out.*

If you are not eligible for a free vaccine, you can also purchase an influenza vaccine. Speak to your GP or other immunisation provider for more information.

## Where can I get more information?

Speak to your GP or other immunisation provider about getting vaccinated against influenza.

Visit [health.gov.au/immunisation](http://health.gov.au/immunisation)

All information in this publication is correct as at March 2020.

Australian Government Department of Health  
National Immunisation Program

A joint Australian, State and Territory Government Initiative

