



Australian Government

Department of Health and Aged Care



Infectious respiratory diseases: prepare and prevent

Communication toolkit

This toolkit provides information and material to support communication with older people from our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to prepare for and prevent the spread of common infectious respiratory diseases, like COVID-19 and influenza (flu), particularly those living in aged care.

Audience

- Older people, their families and carers
- Aged care residents
- Intermediaries of older people, such as GPs, pharmacists, nurse practitioners and allied health professionals.

Background

Old age is one of the biggest risk factors for severe health outcomes from infectious respiratory diseases such as COVID-19 and influenza (flu).

Aged care residents are particularly vulnerable because of their pre-existing health conditions, complex care needs and close living arrangements.

Regular vaccination is still the best line of defence against severe illness, hospitalisation and death from these common diseases. The World Health Organization (WHO) considers immunisation to be the most effective method to prevent deaths from vaccine-preventable diseases in our communities. It's estimated immunisation programs prevent about 3.5 to 5 million deaths globally every year.

Regular communication to older people, their families and carers is critical to ensure vaccinations remain front of mind and minimise the health risks from respiratory infections.

What's in this toolkit

- Key messages
- Discussion guide
- Postcard
- Newsletter article
- Social media posts

Key messages

These messages may assist you to communicate with your community including aged care residents, their families and carers to help prevent the spread of infectious respiratory diseases.

Prepare and prevent

- Older age is one of the biggest risk factors for serious health issues from common infectious respiratory diseases such as COVID-19 and influenza (flu).
- Regular vaccination is the best way to reduce the risks of serious illness, hospitalisation or death from infectious respiratory diseases, for yourself and the people you care about.
- Vaccines are a safe and effective way to protect yourself, your family and others in the community from a respiratory illness.
- A COVID-19 vaccine dose is recommended every 6 months for people aged 75 and over and should be considered for those 65 and over or with compromised immunity.
- People aged 65 to 74 years are eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine dose every 6 months, following discussion with a healthcare provider.
- All adults are eligible for annual COVID-19 and flu vaccines.
- It's safe to get the COVID-19 and flu vaccines on the same day.
- You don't have to wait 6 months between your last COVID-19 infection and vaccination.
- People aged 65 years and older can access vaccinations through their GP, pharmacist, community health centre or Aboriginal health service. Some vaccines are funded for people aged 65 and over, such as the COVID-19 and flu vaccines.
- Residential aged care providers are responsible for making vaccinations, such as COVID-19 and flu accessible to their residents.
- If you have a family member, friend or loved one living or working in an aged care home, please help them to get their COVID-19 and flu vaccines.
- You don't have to wait 6 months between your last COVID-19 infection and having a COVID-19 vaccination.
- Remember to keep up with good hygiene practices to reduce the spread of respiratory illnesses, particularly around older people:
 - cover coughs and sneezes
 - regularly wash your hands
 - wear a face mask when required
 - stay at home when you are unwell.

Vaccination advice and guidance

- Vaccines help protect older people from the more serious effects of infectious respiratory diseases, helping them recover faster.
- All vaccines given in Australia are assessed to ensure they are safe and effective. Find more information on the Department of Health and Aged Care website, health.gov.au, search '[vaccine safety](#)'.
- Older people should talk to their GP or health worker or find a health service on the [Healthdirect website](#), to book their vaccination as soon as they're eligible.
- Protection from influenza and COVID-19 vaccines wanes over time, so older people need to have them regularly. That's why it's important to keep up to date with vaccinations throughout the year.
- Residents in aged care should ask a worker or manager at their home to arrange for a pharmacist or GP to come and vaccinate them from the comfort of their aged care home.
- Aged care residents are particularly vulnerable to severe illness from infectious respiratory diseases like COVID-19 and flu because of their age and health care needs. Outbreaks in an aged care home carries significant health impacts for residents, who may require hospitalisation.
- Vaccination rates for COVID-19 in residential aged care are low. Infectious respiratory diseases like COVID-19 and flu are still a constant and very real risk for older people, and we must do all we can to protect them.

Call to action

COVID-19 and flu vaccinations are free and easy to access, find out more at:
myagedcare.gov.au/protect-from-infection

Discussion guide

Why do I need to get a vaccine?

Vaccination is important for everyone, particularly for people at high risk of severe illness. This includes older people, people who are immunocompromised and people with disability.

For people aged 75 years and older, a COVID-19 vaccine is recommended every 6 months.

People aged 65 to 74 years are eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine dose every 6 months, following discussion with a healthcare provider.

All adults are eligible for an annual COVID-19 and flu vaccination.

Vaccines help protect you from the more serious impacts of some infectious respiratory diseases and may help you recover faster.

Speak to a GP, pharmacist, health worker or nurse at your local Aboriginal health service if you're at high risk of severe illness from common infections like COVID-19 and flu.

Are vaccines safe to use for older people?

All vaccines available in Australia have been assessed and approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) following a rigorous evaluation process to make sure they are safe and effective.

Find more information on vaccine safety on the Department of Health and Aged Care website, [health.gov.au](https://www.health.gov.au) search 'vaccine safety'.

Strong evidence shows how vaccines can help prevent health complications.

You can talk to your GP, pharmacist, health worker or nurse at your local Aboriginal health service about your vaccine options and ask questions if you have concerns.

How do I get a vaccine?

You can get vaccinations from a GP, pharmacist, health worker or nurse at your local Aboriginal health service.

Some vaccines, like for COVID-19, are free.

You can find out about your vaccine eligibility or find a health service at healthdirect.gov.au or call 1800 022 222 if you need advice.

What are the side effects of vaccines?

You may experience a sore arm from the vaccination. Common side effects of COVID-19 vaccinations include a headache, fatigue or fever and chills. Symptoms are generally mild and do not last more than 24 hours.

If you are concerned about vaccine side effects, speak to GP, pharmacist, health worker or nurse at your local Aboriginal health service before getting vaccinated.

See the [healthdirect.gov.au website](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au) and search for 'vaccine side effects' for detailed information.

How often should I get a vaccine?

A COVID-19 vaccination is recommended every 6 months for people aged 75 and over. People aged 65 to 74 years (or those with compromised immunity) are eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine dose every 6 months, following discussion with a healthcare provider.

All adults are eligible for annual COVID-19 and flu vaccines.

It's safe to get the COVID-19 and flu vaccines on the same day.

You don't have to wait 6 months between your last COVID-19 infection and having a vaccination.

Protection from vaccines wanes over time, so those who are more vulnerable like older people, need to have them regularly.

It's important to keep up-to-date with vaccinations throughout the year and take your recommended doses as soon as you're eligible.

What should I do if I get COVID-19?

Older people are advised to take the antiviral treatments as soon as possible after getting COVID-19 symptoms, at least within 5 days.

The treatment may help prevent COVID-19 from becoming severe.

Early assessment and planning for antiviral treatment is essential.

Talk to GP, pharmacist, health worker or nurse at your local Aboriginal health service to find out whether the antiviral treatments are right for you.

Where can I find information about vaccination?

You can find information about vaccination and book an appointment with the health service finder at [healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services) or call 1800 022 222 if you need advice.

Postcard

Download the postcard to use at events.



Regular vaccination is the best way to protect mob and our older community.



Prepare and protect:
1. get vaccinated
2. talk to a health worker
3. keep mob safe.



Visit myagedcare.gov.au/protect-from-infection

Newsletter item

Guidance

This content may be used in your newsletter.

Vaccination protects you and your community

Protect yourself, mob and your older community from infectious respiratory diseases like COVID-19 and flu. These can make you cough and sneeze, give you a runny nose, sore throat or fever. COVID-19 and flu can get worse and give you headaches, aches, shortness of breath and chest pain.

Older age is one of the biggest risk factors for serious health issues from COVID-19 or flu. Regular vaccination is the best way to protect our Elders and older community from getting really sick, needing to go to the hospital or even dying.

When to get a vaccination

A COVID-19 vaccine is recommended every 6 months if you are 75 years or older.

If you are 65 to 74 years of age, talk to your GP or nurse to check if you are eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine dose every 6 months.

An annual COVID-19 and flu vaccine can be considered by all adults.

It's safe to get the COVID-19 and flu vaccines on the same day.

You can get vaccinated by your GP, pharmacist, health worker or nurse at your local Aboriginal health service.

Aged care residents

Older people living in an aged care home are more likely to get common infectious respiratory diseases because of their age, health care needs and shared living.

Outbreaks in an aged care home can be dangerous for residents.

Please help your family member, friend or loved one living or working in aged care to get their COVID-19 and flu vaccines. Speak to a worker or manager at your aged care home to arrange a GP, pharmacist, health worker or nurse from your local Aboriginal health service to visit.

Book in for a vaccination

Have a yarn with your local Aboriginal health service.

Find a health service at healthdirect.gov.au or call 1800 022 222.

Read how to prepare and protect against viruses at myagedcare.gov.au/protect-from-infection

Social media posts

Guidance

This content is suggested for use on your social media channels.

Facebook

Help our Elders and older community book in COVID-19 and flu vaccinations.

Older age is a big risk for getting really sick, going to hospital or even dying from COVID-19 and flu.

Regular vaccination is the best way to protect mob and older people.

If you are 65 years or older you can get a free vaccine through:

- ✓ GP
- ✓ Pharmacist
- ✓ Health worker
- ✓ Nurse
- ✓ Aboriginal health service.

If you have family, friends or loved ones living or working in aged care, please help them get their COVID-19 and flu vaccines.

Find out more at: myagedcare.gov.au/protect-from-infection

Instagram

Vaccination saves lives – be there for your loved ones.

Older age is a big risk for getting really sick, going to hospital or even dying from COVID-19 and flu.

Vaccination reduces the risks of getting really sick, going to hospital, or even dying.

People aged 65+ can get free COVID-19 and flu vaccines through GPs, pharmacists, or health centres.

Speak to your GP, pharmacist, health worker or nurse from your local Aboriginal health service about vaccinations today.

Click the link in our bio to find out more.

Link: myagedcare.gov.au/protect-from-infection

X (Twitter)

Vaccination save lives – be there for your loved ones.

Older people are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 & flu.

Vaccines are safe, effective, & free for those 65+. Get vaccinated through your GP, pharmacist, or health centre.

Find out more at: myagedcare.gov.au/protect-from-infection

Social media tiles

Download these tiles to use individually or as an image carousal on your social media posts.



