



Infectious respiratory diseases: vaccination eligibility and access

Communication toolkit

This toolkit provides information and material to support you to communicate with older people in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It aims to help older people to understand vaccination eligibility and access for 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, health workers and allied health professionals.

Background

As we head into winter, the risk and spread of common respiratory infections such as COVID-19 and influenza (flu) become greater.

Older people are most at risk from these diseases, often getting really sick and going to hospital or even dying. Aged care residents are particularly vulnerable because of their health needs and close living arrangements.

New variants and strains of COVID-19 and flu continue to circulate. It's important older people are protected through regular vaccination before the peak of the winter season. Vaccination is still the best line of defence against severe illness. It's estimated that 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 vaccine-preventable respiratory infections.

What's in this toolkit

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- Discussion guide
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- Video download
- Social media posts

Key messages

These messages may assist you to communicate with your older community including aged care residents, their families and carers to help encourage vaccinations.

Vaccination benefits

- Vaccines help protect Elders and older people from the serious impacts of respiratory infections, lessens symptoms and helps them recover faster.
- There are new strains of COVID-19 and influenza (flu) that continue to circulate. That's why it's important for older people to get vaccinated regularly and before the peak of winter to be the most effective.
- All vaccines given in Australia are assessed to make sure they are safe to use. Find more information on the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing website, [health.gov.au](https://www.health.gov.au), search '[vaccine safety](#)'.

Who is eligible for a vaccination?

- A COVID-19 vaccine dose is recommended every 6 months for people aged 75 years and over.
- People aged 65 to 74 years or adults with compromised immunity are recommended a COVID-19 dose every 12 months. They are eligible for a dose every 6 months, after talking to a healthcare provider.
- Adults aged 65 years and over are eligible for free, annual COVID-19 and flu vaccinations.
- It's safe to get the COVID-19 and flu vaccines on the same day, so you don't have to book multiple appointments.

How to get a vaccination

- People aged 65 years and older can access vaccinations through their GP, pharmacist, community health centre or Aboriginal health service.
- 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 vaccine today..

Aged care residents

- 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 providers can also make arrangements for residents to attend a GP practice to receive their vaccination.
- 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. 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.
- Older age is one of the biggest risk factors for serious health issues from respiratory diseases such as COVID-19 and flu.
- Vaccination is the best way to reduce the risks of serious illness, hospitalisation or death from vaccine-preventable infectious respiratory diseases.
- Vaccines are a safe and effective way to protect yourself from a vaccine-preventable respiratory illness.

Call to action

- COVID-19 and flu vaccinations are free and easy to access, find out more at: **myagedcare.gov.au/protect-from-infection**.
- Older people should talk to their GP or health worker or find a health service on **healthdirect.gov.au**, to book their vaccination today.

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 pregnant women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

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

Regular vaccinations are the best defence to combat new strains and protect against severe illness.

The risk and spread of common diseases like COVID-19 and flu become greater as we head into winter.

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

How often should I get a vaccine?

A COVID-19 vaccination is recommended every 6 months for people aged 75 years and over.

People aged 65 to 74 years (or those with compromised immunity) are recommended to have a COVID-19 vaccine dose every 12 months. They are eligible for a dose every 6 months, following discussion with a healthcare provider.

All adults aged 65 years and older are eligible for annual COVID-19 and flu vaccination.

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

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

How do I get a vaccine?

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

COVID-19 and Influenza vaccine, 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 vaccination include a headache, fatigue or fever and chills. Symptoms are generally mild and do not last more than 24 hours.

Common side effects of influenza vaccines include drowsiness or tiredness, muscle aches, pain, redness and swelling at injection site or mild fever. Most reactions are mild and only last a couple of days and you will recover without any problems.

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

See **healthdirect.gov.au** and search for '[vaccine side effects](#)' for detailed information.

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.

Adverse reactions from vaccinations are rare and the benefits of vaccination overall far outweigh any risks. Strong evidence shows how vaccines can help prevent serious illness and health complications. Severe disease from infection with COVID-19 and flu is more common in vulnerable people who are unvaccinated.

Find more information on vaccine safety on the Department of Health, Disability and Ageing website, **health.gov.au** search '[vaccine safety](#)'.

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

What should I do if I get COVID-19?

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

Oral antivirals may help prevent COVID-19 from becoming severe.

Early assessment and planning for antiviral treatment is essential.

Talk to a GP, pharmacist, nurse or health worker 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 COVID-19 and flu vaccinations and book an appointment using the health service finder at healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services or call 1800 022 222 if you need advice.

Newsletter item

Guidance

This content may be used in your newsletter.

Protect mob from COVID-19 and flu this winter

Winter is the peak season for the spread of infections like COVID-19 and flu. These can be really serious for Elders and our older community. It can make them really sick, needing to go to the hospital or even dying.

We need to do all we can to protect mob, vaccination is the best way to stay protected from these diseases.

Who should get vaccinated

Get a COVID-19 vaccine every:

- 6 months if you are aged 75 years or older
- 12 months if you are aged 65 to 74 years, or 6 months after talking to a health care provider.

Annual COVID-19 and flu vaccines are free for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. You can get them both at the same time.

Encourage your Elders and older community to get vaccinated ahead of the winter peak, so they are protected from getting really sick.

If you are living or working in an aged care home, get a vaccination before an outbreak happens.

Get vaccinated today

Book a vaccination today at your Aboriginal health service.

If you have questions about getting vaccinated, have a yarn with your health worker.

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

Video download

Share or download this video with an Aged Care Council of Elders member to use on your news and social channels: <https://youtu.be/6s4oNnwIPpo?si=oQRR7PJen5-c1nIY>

Social media posts

Guidance

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

Facebook

Protect mob from COVID-19 and flu this winter.

This can be a dangerous time for Elders and our older community. They can get really sick, go to hospital or even die from COVID-19 and flu.

Get a free COVID-19 vaccine every

- 6 months if you're aged 75 years or older
- 12 months if you're aged 65 to 74 years, or 6 months after having a yarn to a health care worker.

Annual COVID-19 and flu vaccines are free for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Book a vaccine today through your:

- GP or pharmacist
- nurse or health worker
- Aboriginal health service.

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

Instagram

Protect mob from COVID-19 and flu this winter.

It's important Elders and our older community have regular vaccines to reduce the risk of getting really sick, going to hospital, or even dying.

If you're aged 75 and over, you should get a COVID-19 vaccine every six months. Those aged 65 to 74 years are also eligible after yarning with health worker.

Book a vaccine today through your:

- GP or pharmacist
- nurse or health worker
- Aboriginal health service.

Click the link in our bio to find out more.

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

X (Twitter)

Protect mob from COVID-19 & flu this winter, Elders and our older community can get really sick and need to go to hospital.

Regular vaccination is the best way to protect yourself and loved ones.

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.



**Book your free
COVID and flu
vaccine this winter.**



**Protect mob from
COVID and flu - book
your vaccine today.**



**Vaccines are safe
and protect mob from
infections.**

