



# Infectious respiratory diseases: vaccination eligibility and access

## Communication toolkit – multicultural communities

This toolkit provides information and material to support communication with older people from our multicultural communities understand vaccination eligibility and access for COVID-19 and influenza (flu).

### 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

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

Older people are most at risk from these diseases often becoming very ill, 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 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 to minimise the health risks from respiratory infections.

## What's in this toolkit

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## 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

- Vaccination helps protect older people from the serious impacts of respiratory infections, lessening symptoms and helping them recover faster.
- There are new strains or variants of influenza (flu) and COVID-19 that continue to circulate. That's why it's important for older people to get vaccinations regularly and before the peak of the winter season 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 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 to get a COVID-19 vaccine every 12 months. They are eligible for a dose every 6 months, after talking to a healthcare provider.
- Adults aged 65 years and over can get yearly COVID-19 and flu vaccinations.
- It's safe to get the COVID-19 and flu vaccines on the same day, 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 or community health centre.
- 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 now, before the peak of the winter season.

### 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 infectious respiratory diseases such as COVID-19 and flu.

- Regular vaccination is the best way to reduce the risks of serious illness, hospitalisation or death from respiratory infections for yourself and the people you care about.
- Vaccines are a safe and effective way to protect yourself from a 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](https://myagedcare.gov.au/protect-from-infection)**.
- Older people should talk to their GP or healthcare worker or find a health service on **[healthdirect.gov.au](https://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, hospitalisation and death these diseases.

The risk and spread of common infectious respiratory diseases such as COVID-19 and influenza (flu) become greater heading into the winter season.

It's important to keep up-to-date with vaccinations throughout the year and get 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 vaccinations.

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.

### How do I get a vaccine?

You can get your vaccinations from your GP, pharmacist or nurse practitioner, or at your community health centre.

Some vaccines, like for COVID-19, are free for people aged 65 and over.

Influenza vaccines are free for eligible people aged 65 and over through the National Immunisation Program.

You can find out about your vaccine eligibility or find a health service at [healthdirect.gov.au](https://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 any vaccination.

Common side effects of COVID-19 vaccinations include a headache, fatigue or fever and chills. Symptoms are generally mild and usually 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 your GP or other health professional before getting vaccinated.

See [healthdirect.gov.au](https://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](https://health.gov.au) search '[vaccine safety](#)'.

You can talk to your GP, pharmacist or nurse practitioner 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 the 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 your GP or nurse practitioner to find out whether the antiviral treatments are right for you.

## **Where can I find information about vaccination?**

You can find information about vaccinations and book an appointment with the health service finder at [healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services](https://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 our community from COVID-19 and flu this winter

Winter is the peak season for the spread of common respiratory infections like COVID-19 and flu. These can be very dangerous for our older community. It can make them get really sick, needing hospital care or even dying.

Regular vaccination is the best way to protect our older community. There are new strains that continue to circulate so older people need to take vaccines regularly and ahead of winter to work the best.

### Who should get a vaccine

Get a COVID-19 vaccine:

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

Get a flu vaccine every 12 months.

It's safe to get the COVID-19 and flu vaccines at the same time.

Encourage your older community to get vaccinated before the peak of the winter season, 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 ahead of the winter peak season through your:

- GP or pharmacist
- local community health centre.

Find a health service at [healthdirect.gov.au](https://healthdirect.gov.au) or call 1800 022 222.

If you live in aged care, ask a worker or manager at your aged care home to arrange for a health provider to visit.



## Video download

Share and 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 our older community from COVID-19 and flu this winter.

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

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

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 every 6 months after talking to a health care worker.

All eligible adults aged 65 years and older can get free annual COVID-19 and flu vaccinations.

Book a vaccine today before the winter peak through your:

- GP or pharmacist
- nurse or health worker
- local community health service.

Find out more at: **[myagedcare.gov.au/protect-from-infection](https://myagedcare.gov.au/protect-from-infection)**

### Instagram

Protect yourself from COVID-19 and flu this winter.

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

If you're aged 75 years and over, you should get a COVID-19 vaccine every 6 months. Those aged 65 to 74 years are also eligible after speaking with a health care worker.

Book a COVID-19 and flu vaccination today through your:

- GP or pharmacist
- nurse or health worker
- local community health service.

Click the link in our bio to find out more.

Link: **[myagedcare.gov.au/protect-from-infection](https://myagedcare.gov.au/protect-from-infection)**

### X (Twitter)

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

Regular vaccination is the best way to protect your loved ones.

Find out more at: **[myagedcare.gov.au/protect-from-infection](https://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.



**Protect yourself this winter –  
talk to your health worker  
about vaccination.**



**Get ahead of winter infections  
– book a vaccine today.**