



About influenza

Influenza (the flu) is a common viral infection that affects people of all ages.

While it may be a mild disease for some, it can also cause serious sickness and may even lead to hospitalisation, even in healthy people.

Getting an Influenza vaccine every year from a health professional, is the safest and most effective way to protect yourself and others from influenza.

About the influenza vaccines

The flu changes every year, so the Influenza vaccine changes too. This is why you need an Influenza vaccine each year. The type of vaccine you get depends on your age and health, and your health professional will tell you which one is right for you or your child.

Australia uses different types of Influenza vaccines that all work well and are latex-free. Both egg-based and cell-based vaccines (for people aged 5 to 64 years) are available through the National Immunisation Program (NIP).

A nasal spray flu vaccine for children aged 2 to 17 years will also be available through some state or territory programs or by private prescription.

Influenza vaccine safety

The influenza vaccine has been around for many decades and has a strong safety record.

Common side effects from the vaccine include mild pain, redness or swelling where the vaccine was given. These side effects usually last for a few days and go away without any treatment. Serious side effects, such as severe allergic reactions, are rare.

Influenza vaccines given as an injection do not contain live flu virus, so they cannot give you the flu. The nasal spray flu vaccine is a live vaccine, so it is not recommended for some people with certain medical conditions.

People with an egg allergy, including those who have had anaphylaxis, can safely receive all Influenza vaccines, but it is a good idea to talk to your health professional if you have concerns.

Who should receive the influenza vaccine

Everyone 6 months and over is recommended to get an influenza vaccine each year. The flu vaccine protects you, but it also can help protect those around you.

Influenza vaccination is especially important for some people

The flu vaccine is strongly recommended and free under the NIP for the following people most at risk of complications from influenza:

- Children aged 6 months to less than 5 years
- Pregnant women for every pregnancy and at any stage of pregnancy
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 6 months and over
- People aged 65 years and over
- People aged 6 months and over with certain medical conditions.

Some states and territories may offer free vaccines for other groups. Talk to your health professional or visit your state or territory health department website to find out.

If you are not eligible for a free vaccine, you can buy the vaccine. Talk to your health professional to find out how much it will cost.

Children under 5 years

Babies and children under 5 years old have a higher risk of complications from influenza and can lead to hospitalisation. Even healthy children can become very unwell with the flu.

Your child can get their Influenza vaccine at the same appointment as their routine childhood vaccines, or at a separate visit.

Children under 2 years who are getting the Influenza vaccine for the first time need 2 doses, given 4 weeks apart, to help build a stronger immune response.

Pregnant women

Influenza can be more serious for pregnant women and their babies. The Influenza vaccine is recommended and free in every pregnancy, and it is safe to have at any stage of pregnancy and while breastfeeding.

During pregnancy, changes to the immune system, heart and lungs can make women more likely to get very sick from Influenza.

Getting vaccinated also protects your baby, as protective antibodies pass through the placenta and help keep them safe in the first few months of life.

If you had last year's Influenza vaccine early in your pregnancy, or before you became pregnant, you should still get the current Influenza vaccine before your baby is born.

The Influenza vaccine can be safely given at the same time as pertussis (whooping cough), RSV and COVID-19 vaccines if recommended by your health professional. Pregnant women should receive the inactivated flu vaccine (the standard injection), rather than the nasal spray version.

People with certain medical conditions

The influenza vaccine is free for people 6 months and over with the following conditions:

- cardiac disease
- chronic respiratory condition
- immunocompromising condition
- haematological disorder
- chronic metabolic disorder
- chronic kidney disease
- chronic neurological condition
- long-term aspirin therapy in children aged 5 to 10 years.

Talk to your health professional about your medical history and eligibility.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are at higher risk of getting really sick and going to hospital from influenza.

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 6 months and over can get the influenza vaccine for free every year.

People aged 65 years and over

Influenza can be especially serious for people aged 65 years and over, so getting vaccinated every year is very important.

All adults in this age group can get a free Influenza vaccine that is specially designed to give a stronger immune response and better protection.

Flu vaccines can also be safely given at the same visit as COVID-19 vaccines, RSV vaccines and the shingles vaccine.

When to get your influenza vaccine

You should get vaccinated each year from when the vaccine is available in March or April to be protected before the influenza season. In most parts of Australia, the peak flu season is from June to September. It is never too late to get the Influenza vaccine, because flu can spread at any time of the year.

If you had last season's Influenza vaccine late last year or early this year, you should still get the new season's vaccine when it becomes available.

Where to get the influenza vaccine

Vaccination appointments can be booked at a range of health services including:

- local doctors or general practices
- local council immunisation clinics (available in some states and territories)
- community health centers
- Aboriginal health services
- participating pharmacies.

Not all these health services will have the free NIP vaccines. Check with your preferred health service to find out:

- about the specific vaccines they can provide
- when they will be available
- when you can book in to have the vaccine
- if there is a consultation fee or service charge to get the free vaccines.

Australian Immunisation Register

Your health professional is required to report all influenza vaccinations to the Australian Immunisation Register to ensure your records are accurate and complete.

Ask about the flu vaccine today health.gov.au/flu

State and territory health department contact numbers:

ACT	02 5124 9800	SA	1300 232 272
NSW	1300 066 055	TAS	1800 671 738
NT	08 8922 8044	VIC	immunisation@health.vic.gov.au
WA	08 9321 1312	QLD	Contact your local Public Health Unit

