



2026 WINTER VACCINATION PROGRAM

INFORMATION FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Influenza (flu), COVID-19 and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccinations for older people

Health professionals play a critical role in recommending and administering vaccines to protect people and communities from serious respiratory illness during winter.

This factsheet summarises eligibility, co-administration and charging arrangements for winter vaccines delivered under national programs in 2026.

Flu, COVID-19 and RSV

Influenza (flu) is a common, contagious respiratory infection caused by influenza viruses. Symptoms can be mild, but the illness can also become severe, leading to hospitalisation and death, even in healthy people.

COVID-19 is a highly infectious respiratory disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). It spreads through droplets and airborne particles.

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a common and highly contagious respiratory infection caused by the RSV-A and RSV-B viruses. It is a major cause of acute respiratory tract infections and spreads through droplets when an infected person talks, coughs or sneezes.

Flu, COVID-19 and RSV are especially serious for older adults, and people with specific medical conditions that increase their risk of severe disease and complications.



Winter vaccines and eligibility

Strains of flu and COVID-19 can change from year to year, and vaccines are updated to protect people against the latest variants. Vaccination reduces the risk of serious illness, hospitalisations and death.

Flu vaccines

Australia uses different types of flu vaccines to prevent influenza and its complications. These are recommended for different age groups and risk cohorts.

Influenza vaccines are available free through the National Immunisation Program (NIP) for people aged 65 years or over and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 6 months and over.

COVID-19 vaccines

COVID-19 vaccines are free through the National COVID-19 Vaccine Program (NCVP) for everyone in Australia regardless of Medicare or visa status.

The following groups are recommended to receive COVID-19 vaccination:

- people aged 75 years and over (one dose recommended **every 6 months**)
- people aged 65 to 74 years (one dose recommended **every 12 months**).

RSV vaccine

From 15 May 2026 the RSV vaccine, Arexvy®, is available free under the NIP for:

- people aged 75 years and over
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 60 years and over.

The RSV vaccine is currently recommended as a single dose, with protection expected to last for at least 2 years.

When to vaccinate

Flu, COVID-19 and RSV vaccines can be given at any time of the year, ideally before the peak winter virus season. Influenza and RSV seasons can start as early as March, peaking between June and September in most parts of Australia.



Co-administration of vaccines

Flu, COVID-19 and RSV vaccines may be administered at the same appointment or separately, depending on patient preference, clinical considerations, and program eligibility.

There are practical advantages to co-administration, including benefits in maximising coverage and ensuring vaccines are received on time. Providers should refer to the [Australian Immunisation Handbook](#) and use clinical judgement when assessing suitability for vaccination and timing of doses.

Cost of vaccination

People must be Medicare-eligible to receive free flu and RSV vaccines under the NIP.

COVID-19 vaccines are free under the NCVP for everyone in Australia, regardless of Medicare or visa status. For COVID-19 vaccines, no fees may be charged for:

- vaccine administration
- booking
- consultations associated with COVID-19 vaccination

Charging patients for COVID-19 vaccination services is a breach of program requirements.



More information

Visit health.gov.au/winter-vaccinations