



WINTER VACCINATIONS ARE YOUR BEST PREPARATION

VACCINATIONS FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Vaccination is the best preparation for winter viruses like influenza (flu), COVID-19, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). By getting vaccinated, you can help protect yourself and stay healthy for the moments that matter.

Flu and COVID-19 viruses continue to change, which is why it's important to stay up to date with recommended vaccinations. RSV can also lead to serious respiratory illness and hospitalisation in older people.

The National Immunisation Program (NIP) offers routine vaccinations free to eligible people of all ages across Australia, including older adults. People who hold or are eligible for a Medicare card can access these free vaccines through participating health services.

COVID-19 vaccines are free for everyone in Australia regardless of Medicare or visa status.



About Influenza (flu)

Flu is a contagious infection of the airways, caused by the influenza virus. It is different and usually more severe than the common cold.

Flu can be especially serious for older adults and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults.

Flu vaccinations are free under the NIP for:

- people aged 65 years or over
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 6 months and over.

Because flu viruses change each year, **annual vaccination** is recommended ahead of the winter season.

About respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)

RSV is a common, highly contagious virus that infects the airways and lungs. It is spread through droplets when an infected person talks, coughs or sneezes. RSV can be especially serious for older adults and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

From 15 May 2026, the RSV vaccine is free under the National Immunisation Program for:

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

Currently, a **single dose** of RSV vaccine is recommended. Protection is expected to last for at least 2 years.

About COVID-19

COVID-19 is a highly contagious respiratory disease. It spreads through droplets and airborne particles. Regular COVID-19 vaccinations help to maintain protection against severe illness, hospitalisation and death.

COVID-19 vaccines are provided free by the Australian Government regardless of a person's Medicare or visa status.

COVID-19 vaccines are recommended for:

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

When to get vaccinated

Peak winter virus season is usually June to September. It's best to get vaccinated each year when the vaccines become available from March or April onwards to be protected before peak season.

You can safely get your flu, COVID-19, and RSV vaccines at the same appointment or separately. Speak with your doctor about your eligibility for other recommended free NIP vaccines.



Where to get vaccinated

You can get free winter vaccinations from a range of vaccination providers across Australia. While the vaccines are free if you are in an eligibility group, your vaccination provider may charge a consultation fee for the visit. Check if there are any fees when making your appointment.

Vaccination providers include:



general practices



participating pharmacies



local council immunisation clinics (available in some states and territories)



community health centres



Aboriginal medical services



residential aged care vaccination providers (for people living in aged care).

You can find a health service near you by visiting [healthdirect.gov.au](https://www.healthdirect.gov.au).



Side effects after immunisation

Most people experience only mild side effects after vaccination, such as a sore arm or feeling tired for a short time. Serious side effects are rare. If you have concerns, ask your vaccination provider about potential side effects.

Vaccines used in Australia are thoroughly tested to ensure safety and effectiveness and are closely monitored.

Checking vaccination history

If you are unsure which vaccines you have already had, you can get your Immunisation History Statement from the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR) by:

- signing in to your Medicare online account on myGov or using the myGov app
- calling Services Australia on 1800 653 809 to request a copy
- asking your vaccination provider to print a copy for you

Your health professional will record your vaccinations on the AIR.



More information

For more information talk to your health professional about winter vaccinations or visit [Visit health.gov.au/winter-vaccinations](https://health.gov.au/winter-vaccinations)