



# THE FLU VACCINE

## YOUR BEST SHOT AT STOPPING THE FLU

### DO YOU WORK IN RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE?

HERE IS IMPORTANT INFORMATION TO HELP YOU PREPARE FOR THE 2019 INFLUENZA SEASON

- Vaccination is the most effective way of reducing the impact of influenza in the community.
- The influenza virus can spread quickly and easily in residential aged care facilities.
- The elderly are more vulnerable to serious complications from the influenza virus.
- Disease control experts recommend influenza vaccination every year for all healthcare workers, staff, volunteers working in residential aged care and other long-term care facilities and visitors to such facilities.
- Vaccination rates for staff working in aged care are currently well below the levels recommended by national guidelines and can be improved.
- To protect yourself and the people you care for, you should get vaccinated every year. The influenza virus is always changing so the influenza vaccine changes too.
- Getting the vaccine from April will provide protection during the peak influenza period, from around June to September, in most parts of Australia.
- All Australian Government subsidised residential aged care providers must offer an influenza vaccination program to their staff. Speak to your employer about accessing your workplace vaccination program.
- Practicing good hygiene is also an important way to help prevent the spread of influenza in the community, and in aged care facilities and hospitals.

#### What is influenza?

**Influenza is caused by a virus that can infect your nose, throat and sometimes lungs. It spreads easily from person to person through coughing, sneezing and close physical contact, such as happens when caring for residents.**

Influenza symptoms such as fever, headache, tiredness and muscle aches can start suddenly. Elderly people might also experience confusion. Symptoms can last for a week or more. When severe, complications such as pneumonia and worsening of existing medical conditions can lead to hospitalisation and sometimes death.

#### Why should I get the influenza vaccine?

**Every year the influenza vaccine changes to match the influenza viruses that are most likely to be circulating during the influenza season. Getting vaccinated every year is the best way of preventing influenza and any of its complications.**

Vaccination against influenza is an important way of preventing the spread of the influenza virus. It is especially important for staff and residents of aged care facilities where the influenza virus can spread quickly and easily.

It is important that staff working in residential aged care facilities get vaccinated every year to protect themselves and to stop spread to

residents who are vulnerable to influenza. All Australian Government subsidised residential aged care providers must offer influenza vaccination programs to staff. However, not everyone takes up this vital opportunity to get vaccinated.

#### Where can I get the influenza vaccine?

If you work in residential aged care, talk to your employer about accessing your workplace vaccination program. Alternatively, talk to your GP or other immunisation provider to arrange your influenza vaccine.

#### When should I get the influenza vaccine?

There is evidence that the influenza vaccine gives the most protection within the first three to four months after it is given. It's important to make sure you are protected in time for when influenza is most common, from around June to September, in most parts of Australia. Make sure you get the details of the vaccination for your records and ask your immunisation provider to report the vaccination to the Australian Immunisation Register.

Vaccines are available through the National Immunisation Program from April 2019. However, some vaccines may be available on the private market earlier.

## Influenza vaccine safety

The influenza vaccine does not contain any live virus, so you cannot get influenza from the vaccine.

Some people might experience side effects within one to two days after influenza vaccination. These may include soreness, redness, discomfort and swelling at the injection site, tiredness, muscle aches and low fever. These side effects are usually mild and go away within a few days without any treatment.

It is safe for people with an egg allergy to have influenza vaccines.

**People with a history of serious allergic reactions (anaphylaxis) to egg should receive their influenza vaccine in a medical facility with staff experienced in recognising and treating anaphylaxis.**

If you have experienced any of the following talk to your immunisation provider before getting an influenza vaccine:

- a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) following a previous influenza vaccination
- a serious allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to any influenza vaccine ingredient.

**You are encouraged to report any concerning event following influenza vaccination to:**

- your GP or other immunisation provider
- pharmacists from NPS MedicineWise on 1300 134 237
- state or territory health departments, or
- the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) through the 'Safety information' link on the TGA website.

## Other ways to stop the spread of influenza

Practicing good personal hygiene is also an important way to prevent the spread of influenza in the community and shared facilities. This includes:

- Washing your hands regularly preferably with soap and water before and after contact with others, and before handling food. Alternatively, use alcohol-based hand rub.
- Staying at home when you are sick.
- Covering your nose and mouth with tissues or your elbow when you sneeze or cough. Make sure you throw tissues away and perform hand hygiene immediately afterwards.
- Not sharing personal items such as cups, plates and cutlery.

Experts recommend that aged care facilities have easily accessible internal policies and procedures on infection control and have a comprehensive outbreak management plan in place, including notification of outbreaks to local state and territory public health units. If you work in residential aged care, talk to your employer to learn more about the policies, procedures, and plans that are in place for your facility.

For more information about infection control in residential aged care, see the *Infection Control pocket book* for aged care workers/staff at <https://agedcare.health.gov.au/tools-and-resources/encouraging-better-practice-in-aged-care-ebpac/infection-control>

## To find out more about influenza and the National Immunisation Program:

- call the National Immunisation Program Information Line: **1800 671 811**
- visit the Department of Health's immunisation website at [health.gov.au/immunisation](http://health.gov.au/immunisation)

## If you have any questions about the influenza vaccine in your state and territory or infection control, please contact:

<b>ACT</b>	02 6205 2300	<b>SA</b>	1300 232 272
<b>NSW</b>	1300 066 055	<b>TAS</b>	1800 671 738
<b>NT</b>	08 8922 8044	<b>VIC</b>	1300 882 008
<b>WA</b>	08 9321 1312	<b>QLD</b>	13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84)



- Residents aged 65 years and older and those with certain existing medical conditions under the age of 65 years can receive a free influenza vaccine under the National Immunisation Program each year.
- A specific influenza vaccine is available to provide better protection for people aged 65 years and older.
- Visit [health.gov.au/immunisation](http://health.gov.au/immunisation) to learn more.