



GET THE FLU SHOT BEFORE THE FLU GETS YOU

Flu shot available now Consumer fact sheet



- Vaccination is the single most effective way of preventing the spread of flu in the community.
- If you want to protect yourself from the flu, get vaccinated every year because the flu virus is constantly changing.
- The flu vaccine is available free under the National Immunisation Program from April 2016 for those people who have the greatest risk of becoming severely ill from flu.
- Flu vaccines are **age-specific**, so parents should tell their doctor the age of their child before vaccinating.

WHAT IS THE FLU?

Influenza (flu) is a highly contagious viral infection that spreads easily from person to person through coughing, sneezing and close contact.

The flu virus infects your nose, throat and sometimes your lungs. Unlike a cold, symptoms such as fever, sore throat and muscle aches develop suddenly with flu and last about a week. In some cases, severe illness and complications such as pneumonia and bronchitis can develop, which can result in hospitalisation and even death. The flu can also make some existing medical conditions worse.

WHY SHOULD I GET THE FLU SHOT?

Annual vaccination is the best way of preventing the flu and any associated illness.

You should get the flu shot every year because the flu virus is constantly changing. Every year, the flu vaccine changes too, so it protects against the flu strains which are most likely to be around during that winter.

Being vaccinated in autumn allows time for the vaccine to work before the flu season starts and offers protection throughout the winter months. Even if you received a flu shot towards the end of the last flu season, you should still be vaccinated again before this flu season.

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

WHO IS ELIGIBLE FOR THE FREE FLU SHOT?

Vaccination experts recommend the flu vaccine for everyone from six months of age, however the vaccine is **free** under the National Immunisation Program for people at high risk of complications. They are:

Pregnant women

Pregnant women are at higher risk of severe complications associated with the flu. Vaccinating against flu at any stage during pregnancy is safe and also provides some protection for babies during their first, vulnerable months of life.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from six months to less than five years of age, and 15 years of age and over, are eligible for free flu shots.

People 65 years and over

People aged 65 years and over have the highest risk of complications associated with seasonal flu.

People with certain medical conditions

People with some existing medical conditions are more likely to experience complications from flu. These include anyone who is six months of age and over who has:

- heart disease
- severe asthma
- chronic lung condition
- chronic illness requiring medical follow-up or hospitalisation in the past year
- diseases of the nervous system
- impaired immunity
- diabetes
- children aged six months to 10 years on long-term aspirin therapy



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FLU VACCINE FOR CHILDREN

The flu vaccines are age-specific. Make sure your vaccination provider knows how old your child is so they can receive the correct dose and brand of vaccine.

FLU VACCINE SAFETY

Common side effects usually occur within one to two days following flu vaccination and include soreness, redness, pain and swelling at the injection site, drowsiness, tiredness, muscle aches and low grade fever. If these side effects occur they are usually mild and go away within a few days, usually without any treatment.

There may be a small increase in the risk of fever when a child receives both the flu vaccine and the pneumococcal disease vaccine (Prevenar 13) at the same time. These two vaccines can be given separately, with a least a three day interval between them, to reduce the likelihood of fever. If you are concerned, you should discuss this option with your doctor or vaccination provider.

You are encouraged to report any adverse event following the flu vaccine to your doctor or vaccination provider, to the Adverse Medicines Events Line on 1300 134 237, or to the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) through the 'Report a problem' link on the TGA website.

WHERE CAN I GET THE FLU SHOT?

Vaccines are available from April 2016 from doctors and other vaccination providers.

CONTACT LIST

State and territory contact numbers:

ACT: 02 6205 2300

NSW: 1300 066 055

NT: 08 8922 8044

WA: 08 9321 1312

SA: 1300 232 272

TAS: 1800 671 738

VIC: 1300 882 008

QLD: 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84)

For more information about the 2016 seasonal influenza vaccine, visit immunise.health.gov.au or call the Immunise Australia Information line: 1800 671 811.

A more detailed fact sheet, *Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) information for individuals and families on the influenza vaccines available in 2016*, is also available on the Immunise Australia website.

All information in this fact sheet is correct as at 22 March 2016 and valid for the 2016 influenza season.