

Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Program

Important Facts

- From 1 January 2010 the Government is extending its free vaccine program for seasonal flu.
- Under the National Immunisation Program (NIP), anyone 65 years of age and over, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people 15 years and over, pregnant women and people with underlying medical conditions from six months of age will now be eligible to receive the free flu vaccine.
- Vaccines will be available directly from GP surgeries, immunisation providers and Aboriginal Medical Services from mid March 2010.
- Approximately 2,500 Australians die every year either directly from the seasonal flu or from complications due to the flu.
- Flu vaccinations are the single most effective action in helping fight the spread of influenza in the community.
- If you have received the pandemic H1N1 vaccination and you are in one of the eligible groups you also need to have the seasonal vaccination to ensure full protection this flu season.
- If you are in any of the groups mentioned in this brochure, talk with your doctor or immunisation provider about getting the vaccine.

State and Territory contact information

ACT	(02) 6205 2300
NSW	Contact the local Public Health Units (look under "Health" in the White Pages)
NT	(08) 8922 8044
QLD	13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84)
SA	(08) 8226 7177
TAS	1800 671 738
VIC	1300 882 008
WA	(08) 9321 1312

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Get Vaccinated

Influenza, commonly known as the flu, is caused by a virus which spreads easily from person to person through infected droplets in the air and by hands infected with the virus.

The virus infects your nose, throat and, sometimes, your lungs. In most people it causes mild to moderate symptoms for about a week, but some people can develop severe illness and complications which may need to be treated in hospital and can even result in death.

Flu complications include pneumonia and bronchitis. Flu can also make some underlying medical conditions worse.

Flu is a vaccine preventable disease. Because the flu virus is constantly changing, it is necessary to get vaccinated every year. The flu vaccine protects against the three strains of the virus which are most likely to occur over the winter. Vaccination is recommended in autumn to give time for immunity to develop before the flu season starts. You cannot get flu from the vaccine.

To prevent complications from flu it is recommended that people in the eligible groups outlined in this brochure get vaccinated each year.

65 Years and Over

People aged 65 years and over have the highest risk of complications associated with seasonal flu. Vaccination decreases hospitalisation and mortality rates by up to 50%.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People

Respiratory diseases are major causes of preventable sickness and death in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are now eligible for the free flu vaccine from 15 years of age.

Pregnancy

Pregnant women are at higher risk of severe complications associated with the virus. The flu vaccine is safe for pregnant women, including in the first trimester. Vaccinating against flu during pregnancy also provides protection for the baby during the first vulnerable months of life.

People Medically at Risk

People with some existing medical conditions are at increased risk of complications from flu and may now be eligible for free seasonal flu vaccine. These include anyone who is over six months of age and has a condition such as:

- heart disease;
- chronic respiratory conditions;
- chronic illness requiring medical follow-up or hospitalisation in the past year;
- diseases of the neuromuscular system;
- impaired immunity; or
- aged six months to 10 years and on long-term aspirin therapy.

