



# FACT SHEET FOR IMMUNISATION PROVIDERS

## INFLUENZA VACCINATION 2010

### Extended eligibility for free seasonal influenza vaccine under the National Immunisation Program

From 1 January 2010 eligibility for free vaccine under the National Immunisation Program (NIP) has been extended (see box below).

#### National Immunisation Program eligibility for seasonal influenza vaccine from 1 January 2010

- All individuals aged 65 years and over;
- All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years and over;
- Individuals aged 6 months and over with medical conditions predisposing to severe influenza, namely;
  - *Cardiac disease*, including cyanotic congenital heart disease, coronary artery disease and congestive heart failure
  - *Chronic respiratory conditions*, including suppurative lung disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and severe asthma
  - *Other chronic illnesses requiring regular medical follow up or hospitalisation in the previous year*, including diabetes mellitus, chronic metabolic diseases, chronic renal failure and haemoglobinopathies
  - *Chronic neurological conditions that impact on respiratory function*, including multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injuries and seizure disorders
  - *Impaired immunity*, including HIV, malignancy and chronic steroid use
  - *Children aged 6 months to 10 years on long term aspirin therapy*
- Pregnant women.



The decision as to whether an individual patient has an eligible medical condition is a clinical one. Immunisation providers should be guided by pages 190 to 192 in the *Australian Immunisation Handbook 9th Edition*, which is accessible via the Immunise Australia website at <http://www.immunise.health.gov.au>

People who were previously eligible for vaccine through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS)\* are now eligible for free vaccine under the NIP.

From 1 March 2010, influenza vaccine is no longer available through the PBS. This change aims to improve access to influenza vaccination for persons at increased risk of adverse consequences from influenza infection by making it easier to offer opportunistic vaccination.

Vaccine may be given to residents of nursing homes and long-term care facilities and homeless people as their prevalence of underlying medical conditions and their living situations predispose them to complications from influenza.

### Strains in the 2010 vaccine

The vaccine for the Australian 2010 influenza season has three strains – the pandemic (H1N1) 2009 strain (A/California/7/2009), an H3N2 strain (A/Perth/16/2009) and a B strain (B/Brisbane/60/2008).

### Availability of seasonal vaccine

Supplies will be available across the country from mid-March 2010.

Junior influenza vaccine (Fluvax® Junior) will be supplied and is recommended for medically at risk children from 6 months to less than 3 years of age. The small requirement for doses for this cohort will, of necessity, mean that individual practices may have a limited supply at any one time. If no junior vaccine is available, an eligible child under the age of 3 years can be given 0.25mL of either Vaxigrip® or Influvac® vaccine, after expelling the excess 0.25mL from the syringe, using the procedure described on page 189 of the *Australian Immunisation Handbook 9th Edition*.

### Dose required

Age	Dose	Number of doses (first vaccination)	Number of doses (subsequent years) <sup>^</sup>
6 months to less than 3 years	0.25mL	2 <sup>†</sup>	1
3 to less than 10 years	0.5mL	2 <sup>†</sup>	1
10 years and over	0.5mL	1	1

<sup>^</sup>Children 6 months to 9 years of age who do not receive 2 doses in the first year of vaccination should have 2 doses the following year.

<sup>†</sup>The two doses should be given at least 1 month (4 weeks) apart.

\*Prior to 1 March 2010, influenza vaccine was available on the PBS as a restricted benefit for persons at special risk of adverse consequences from infections of the lower respiratory tract. Because the price of the vaccine was below the PBS co-payment, only concession card holders received the vaccine at a subsidised price. Eligibility for a PBS prescription was intended to be based on medical risk not concessional status. Similarly, the new NIP eligibility is based on medical risk not concessional status.

### Prior immunisation with pandemic influenza (H1N1) 2009 vaccine (Panvax®)

People who are eligible for free seasonal influenza vaccine who have previously been vaccinated against pandemic influenza (H1N1) 2009 should be given seasonal influenza vaccine in autumn to ensure protection against the other two strains that could possibly circulate this winter. Children less than 10 years of age who have had Panvax® but have not received seasonal vaccine before will need 2 doses of seasonal vaccine a month apart, as indicated in the previous table.

### Interval between doses of pandemic and seasonal vaccines

For adults and older children there is no recommended dose interval. **Vaccination with seasonal influenza vaccine should not be delayed because of recent Panvax® H1N1 vaccination.** Boosting of immunity against pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza will occur if the vaccines are given at least a month apart, however, high levels of immunity against pandemic (H1N1) 2009 influenza occur with a single dose of Panvax® H1N1 and boosting is not considered necessary.

For children under the age of 10 years, the dosage intervals are generally at least one month apart, in accordance with the recommendations of the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation on the health emergency website at <http://www.healthemergency.gov.au/internet/healthemergency/publishing.nsf/Content/national-vaccination-program#atagi>

### Influenza vaccination in pregnant women

**Influenza vaccine is recommended and safe to be given at any time during pregnancy.** Pregnant women are at increased risk of severe seasonal influenza requiring hospitalisation, with the highest risk in late pregnancy. During the first wave of the H1N1 2009 pandemic, increased rates of mortality and severe morbidity were seen in pregnant women in Australia and overseas. Vaccination has been shown to protect both the pregnant woman and the newborn baby in the early months of life.

### Influenza vaccination for children

Children with medical risk factors are recommended to receive annual seasonal influenza vaccination and are eligible for funded vaccine. The *Australian Immunisation Handbook 9th Edition* recommends annual influenza vaccination for any person aged 6 months and older who wishes to reduce the likelihood of becoming ill with influenza. However, **vaccine for children without risk factors is not funded through the NIP.** The Western Australian Government is continuing in 2010 a trial of providing seasonal influenza vaccine for children aged less than 5 years of age.

**All children who do not receive seasonal influenza vaccine should be offered Panvax® H1N1, which continues to be available free of charge.** Children are at increased risk of acquiring and transmitting influenza. Each year, including during the first wave of pandemic (H1N1) 2009, young children have high rates of hospitalisation from influenza.

### Influenza vaccination in aged care facilities

The *Australian Immunisation Handbook 9th Edition* recommends that all residents and staff of nursing homes and other long term facilities be vaccinated against influenza. Vaccination both protects individual residents and assists in preventing outbreaks. Vaccination of workers protects the individual worker and reduces the need for time off work during the winter season. It also increases protection for the residents by reducing the risk of transmission of the virus from staff. High levels of staff vaccination assist in the prevention of outbreaks in facilities. **Vaccine for staff is not funded under the NIP, unless they meet the eligibility criteria.** Vaccine can be provided through private prescription and may be available through workplace vaccination programs.

### Influenza vaccination for health care workers and carers

Influenza vaccination is strongly recommended for health care workers, including primary care practice staff, and others caring for people who are at high risk of complications from influenza. By being vaccinated, health care workers and carers not only protect themselves but also reduce the risk of transmitting the infection to vulnerable people, especially those for whom vaccination may be less effective. **Vaccine for people in these groups is not funded under the NIP, unless they meet the eligibility criteria.** Vaccine can be provided through private prescription and may be available through workplace vaccination programs.

### Influenza vaccination for those not eligible for free seasonal vaccine

For patients who are not eligible for free seasonal influenza vaccine, supply will be available on the private market as in previous years. This will not be sufficient, however, to vaccinate the whole population.

### Free Pandemic vaccine for those choosing not to have seasonal influenza vaccine

There are plentiful supplies of the free pandemic influenza vaccine, Panvax® H1N1, which can be offered to any patients who wish to be protected against pandemic (H1N1) 2009, the virus strain considered most likely to cause illness in children and younger adults without risk factors in 2010.