



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing

CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

Professor Jim Bishop AO
MD MMed MBBS FRACP FRCPA
Commonwealth Chief Medical Officer

HEALTH INFORMATION UPDATE

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Seasonal flu vaccination for young children can be resumed

Continued close monitoring of side effects with this year's seasonal flu vaccine in children under five years of age has shown that the higher than usual occurrence of fever and febrile convulsions appears to be confined to the vaccine Fluvax, manufactured by CSL.

In my last report to parents and the medical profession on June 1 this year, I highlighted that Fluvax appeared to be the main concern but that, because of limited use there was insufficient evidence about the extent of fever and febrile convulsions associated with the other vaccines on the market.

I therefore continued to recommend the suspension of use of all seasonal flu vaccinations for healthy children under 5 years of age. At the same time I also encouraged parents to speak with their doctor about vaccination if a child had an underlying medical condition where flu could be harmful to the child and to carefully weigh the risks and benefits of vaccination in each individual child.

Since that announcement continued investigations in Australia and overseas indicate that there does not appear to be the higher than normal incidence of febrile convulsions in children under five with the other seasonal flu vaccines Influvac and Vaxigrip.

In particular, data from Australia and New Zealand show that rates of fever and febrile convulsions associated with Vaxigrip and Influvac are similar to those seen with trivalent seasonal flu vaccine in previous years.

While to date it has still not been possible to identify a biological or other basis that would explain the higher than expected observed rates of fever and febrile convulsions with Fluvax, the investigations are continuing.

In the meantime I am now advising that if parents of children under five years of age wish to have their children vaccinated against seasonal flu that they should discuss with their GP or vaccine provider the use of Vaxigrip or Influvac.

It should be noted that influenza itself often causes fever in young children which can lead to febrile convulsions and that all flu vaccines can cause this side effect which, if handled properly, is usually short lived. I am writing to all GPs and immunisation providers to advise them of my latest advice and to ask doctors to explain to parents what to do if fever occurs following vaccination.

More information is available on the Immunise Australia Hotline at 1800 671 811.

Media contact: Kay McNiece, 0412 132 585