



GET THE FLU SHOT BEFORE THE FLU GETS YOU

**FLU SHOT
AVAILABLE
NOW**

- 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 or sneezing, or by touching surfaces which people who have the flu have touched/coughed or sneezed on and then touching your mouth or nose.

The flu virus infects your nose, throat and sometimes your lungs. It is different from a cold as symptoms such as fever, sore throat and muscle aches develop suddenly 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. Make sure your vaccine service provider knows you identify as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander.

You can have a free flu shot if you are an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander person who is:

- six months of age to less than five years of age
- 15 years of age and over
- five years of age and over with one of the following medical conditions:
 - heart disease
 - lung conditions, such as asthma
 - chronic illnesses that mean you have to see a doctor more often, such as diabetes
 - chronic diseases of the nervous system
 - low immunity
 - renal disease and failure
- pregnant (at any stage). Pregnant women are at higher risk of severe complications associated with flu. Vaccinating against flu during pregnancy also provides some protection for babies during their first vulnerable months of life.
- six months of age to 10 years old who is on aspirin



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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 following flu vaccination 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 (Prevenar13) 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. Talk to your doctor, Aboriginal Health Worker or nurse about your flu shot. You can also go to your Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation.

Contact List

State and territory contact numbers:

ACT: 02 6205 2300

NSW: 1300 066 055

NT: 08 8922 8044

QLD: 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84)

SA: 1300 232 272

TAS: 1800 671 738

VIC: 1300 882 008

WA: 08 9321 1312

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.