



Flu (influenza) vaccine

- **Flu is a highly contagious disease. Some people are at risk of serious health complications if they get flu.**
- **People most at risk of serious complications from flu are eligible for free flu vaccinations (refer to list in 'who should get the flu vaccine' below).**
- **You should get vaccinated against the flu every year.**

Influenza, commonly known as flu, is a highly contagious disease caused by the influenza virus. For best protection against flu, people are strongly advised to get the flu vaccine every year.



Listen to the ABC interview (external link) with Dr Paul Effler, Senior Medical Advisor about flu vaccination. Read the transcript (PDF 217KB).

Why get the flu vaccine?

Flu can make existing medical conditions worse, and can cause high fever and pneumonia. It is easily spread by coughing, sneezing, or touching contaminated surfaces and then touching your mouth or nose. Good hand hygiene is important to prevent the spread of flu and other infections.

Is the Flu vaccine safe?

Yes. Any medicine, including the flu vaccine, can have potentially serious side effects, such as severe allergic reaction. However the risk of this is extremely small.

AusVaxSafety is a national program to monitor the type and rate of reactions to each year's new influenza vaccine. AusVaxSafety data shows more than 92 per cent of people who received the flu vaccine in 2018 had no reactions. Those who did have a reaction had mainly local reactions at the injection site, fever and rash. Learn more at NCIRS (external site).

Learn more about possible side effects of immunisation.

The flu vaccine triggers an immune response that can protect you from becoming ill if you are exposed to the influenza virus.

The flu vaccine cannot cause flu as it is made from the killed virus, not living viruses.

All vaccines available in Australia must pass strict safety testing before being approved for use by the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) (external site).

Learn more about vaccination safety.



Who should get the flu vaccine? Can I get it for free?

Everyone is encouraged to get the flu vaccine. Some groups of people are at higher risk of serious complications from flu and are strongly recommended to get immunised.

The following groups are eligible to receive free government funded flu vaccinations:

- pregnant women (at any stage of pregnancy)
- children aged 6 months to less than 5 years (learn more about the flu vaccine for children)
- people 65 years and older
- Aboriginal people 6 months and older
- People 6 months and older with medical conditions that put them at risk of severe flu, including:
 - heart disease
 - kidney disease
 - chronic respiratory conditions
 - chronic illnesses that required regular medical attention or hospitalisation in the previous year
 - chronic neurological conditions
 - impaired immunity
- children aged 6 months to 10 years receiving long-term aspirin therapy.

Note: The vaccine is free however you may be charged a consultation fee. Check costs when making an appointment

When should I get the flu vaccine?

For best protection against flu, people are strongly advised to get the flu vaccine every year.

The best time to get vaccinated is in late autumn (May or June) as protection may wane around 3 to 4 months after getting immunised. This ensures optimal protection during the peak flu season in WA from July to October.

Note: after vaccination it can take up to 2 weeks to develop protection.

It is never too late to get the flu vaccine.

Where can I get the flu vaccine?

The flu vaccine is available in metropolitan and country WA from immunisation providers including GP clinics, community health clinics and Aboriginal Medical Services.

In 2018, a two-year trial started allowing people 65 years and older to get their government funded flu vaccination at some pharmacies. Note: the vaccine is free however a consultation fee may be charged.



For further information, contact your GP or immunisation provider.

More information

- Learn more about influenza.
- Learn more about the flu vaccine for children.
- Learn more about the flu vaccine in pregnancy.
- Learn more about the flu vaccine for people aged 65 years and over.
- Got more questions? Read the FAQs.
- View and download the flu (influenza) vaccine fact sheet (PDF 343KB).
- Visit the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA website, external site).
- Find out more about the Western Australian Vaccine Safety Surveillance (WAVSS) system.
- Visit the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI, external site).

Where to get help

- For emergency or life-threatening conditions, visit an emergency department or dial triple zero (000) to call an ambulance
- See your doctor
- Visit a GP after hours
- Ring *healthdirect* on 1800 022 222

Remember

- Influenza (flu) is a highly contagious disease.
- Some people are at risk of serious health complications if they get the flu.
- Children, pregnant women, people over 65 and people with some existing medical conditions are eligible for free flu vaccinations.
- You should get vaccinated against the flu every year.

This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.

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