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## Influenza (Flu)

The Influenza (Flu) Immunisation Program is funded under the Immunise Australia Program.

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[Video explaining the National Influenza Program](#)

## Influenza (Flu)

Influenza (flu) is caused by two types of viruses in humans (Influenza A and B). Influenza spreads from person to person through the air by coughing or sneezing and by direct contact from your hands.

Symptoms may occur 1 to 3 days after infection and could include:

- tiredness;
- fever;
- chills;
- headache;
- cough;
- sneezing and runny nose;
- poor appetite; and
- muscle aches.

Further health problems can develop in some people after flu infection including pneumonia, heart, blood system and liver complications, which can lead to death, especially in children and older people.

Children and adults with egg allergy, including anaphylaxis, can be safely vaccinated with influenza. However this should be discussed with their doctor or immunisation provider.

Flu is a vaccine preventable disease, but vaccines need to be given each year, because the viruses are always changing. Under the [Immunise Australia Program](#) flu vaccination is recommended as part of routine vaccinations for [older Australians](#), [Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples who are aged from six months to less than five years and over 15 years of age](#), [pregnant women](#) and [individuals aged 6 months and over with medical conditions that can lead to severe influenza](#).

[Question and Answers for seasonal influenza vaccination](#)

Information on products relating to seasonal or pandemic influenza vaccine is available [online from the Publications and Resources web page](#).

[To report an adverse event associated with Influenza vaccination](#)

For information about vaccination in your area contact your [state or territory health department](#). For technical information or information about vaccines, refer to the flu section of the [Australian Immunisation Handbook 10th Edition 2013](#).

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## **Influenza (flu) Immunisation for Older Australians**

Free flu vaccine is available for all Australians aged 65 and over. People in this age group are at high risk from influenza and its complications, with the majority of deaths from influenza occurring in this age group.

To receive your flu immunisation, visit your doctor or immunisation provider. It is important to note that whilst the vaccine is free, a consultation fee may apply.

For information about vaccination in your area contact your [state or territory health department](#). For technical information or information about vaccines, refer to the influenza section of the [Australian Immunisation Handbook 10th Edition 2013](#).

## **Influenza (flu) Immunisation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People**

From 2015 all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged six months to less than five years are eligible for a free flu shot. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children are more likely than non-Indigenous children to be hospitalised and five times as likely die from flu related infections. Free flu vaccines are also available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years and over and people five to 15 years who have a specific medical condition that increases their susceptibility to the flu.

Free flu vaccines are available through community controlled Aboriginal Medical Services (AMS), state/territory immunisation clinics and general practitioners.

[Factsheet for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander persons](#)

## **Influenza (flu) Vaccination for Pregnant Women**

Free flu vaccine is available for all pregnant women. Pregnant women are at high risk of severe consequences of flu infection. The flu vaccine is safe for pregnant women and provides protection for themselves and their new born baby for the first six months after birth.

To receive your flu vaccination visit your local doctor or immunisation provider. It is important to note that the vaccine is free, however a consultation fee may apply.

For information about vaccination in your area contact your state or territory health department. For technical information or information about vaccines, refer to the flu section of the Australian Immunisation Handbook 10th Edition 2013.

## Influenza Vaccination for Medically at Risk Australians

Influenza vaccine is available free for all Australians aged 6 months of age and over with medical conditions that can lead to severe influenza.

The table below outlines the medical conditions that are associated with an increased risk of influenza disease complications.

Category	Vaccination strongly recommended but not limited to individuals with the following clinical conditions
Cardiac disease	Cyanotic congenital heart disease Congestive heart failure Coronary artery disease
Chronic respiratory conditions†	Severe asthma (for which frequent hospitalisation is required) Cystic fibrosis Bronchiectasis Suppurative lung disease Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) Chronic emphysema
Chronic neurological conditions†	Hereditary and degenerative CNS diseases† (including multiple sclerosis) Seizure disorders Spinal cord injuries Neuromuscular disorders
Immunocompromising conditions	Immunosuppressive therapy due to disease or treatment (e.g. malignancy, transplantation, HIV and/or chronic steroid use) Asplenia or splenic dysfunction HIV infection
Diabetes and other metabolic disorders	Type 1 diabetes Type 2 diabetes Chronic metabolic disorders
Renal disease	Chronic renal failure
Haematological disorders	Haemoglobinopathies

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Persons who have any condition that compromises the management of respiratory secretions and is associated with an increased risk of aspiration should be vaccinated.

‡ All immunocompromised persons, irrespective of age, who receive influenza vaccine for the first time are recommended to receive two vaccine doses, at least 4 weeks apart, and 1 dose annually thereafter.

\* NOTE: Additional medical conditions predisposing to severe influenza have been added in *The Australian Immunisation Handbook*, 10th edition, released in March 2013. However, some of these groups are not currently included as eligible for vaccination under the NIP. Influenza vaccination is recommended for persons who have the conditions below (but **not funded** under the NIP unless they fall under one of the categories above):

- Down syndrome
- Significant obesity defined as a BMI  $\geq 30$  kg/m<sup>2</sup>
- Alcoholism requiring regular medical follow-up or hospitalisation in the preceding year.

Refer to *The Australian Immunisation Handbook*, 10th edition, 2013 for further details.

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