



# 2018 Flu Vaccination Information Update

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## What is influenza?

The flu (also called influenza) is a very contagious infection of the airways which spreads easily from person to person. It is especially serious for babies, people over 65 years of age and pregnant people. Compared with other viral respiratory infections (such as the common cold), the flu can cause severe illness, and in some cases, life-threatening complications or even death.

The flu infects many parts of the body, including the nose, throat and lungs. Symptoms can include fevers, sore throat, cough, fatigue, muscle aches, headaches, runny nose and watery eyes. The fever and body aches usually last for 3-5 days, but coughing and fatigue can often persist for 2-3 weeks.

## Who should get a flu shot?

We strongly recommend the flu vaccination for everyone aged 6 months and over.

***Vaccination is a safe and effective way to protect you, your family and your community from serious disease caused by the flu.***

## What are the benefits of getting vaccinated?

There are lots of benefits associated with getting a flu vaccine each year. Not only do you reduce your own risk of becoming infected with influenza, but you also help protect other people in the community who are at greater risk of getting seriously ill from the flu. This includes more vulnerable groups such as the elderly, people with chronic health conditions and young children (especially infants younger than 6 months old who are too young to get vaccinated). The more people who are vaccinated in our community, the less likely the disease will spread. Flu vaccinations may also make your illness milder if you do get sick and can reduce the risk of more serious flu outcomes, like hospitalisation and death.

## Can the vaccine stop me from getting the flu and just how effective is it?

Unfortunately, the flu vaccine doesn't provide complete protection against influenza. It does however provide a good level of protection, which is 70% - 90% effective in healthy adults. It's important to know that it takes around two weeks for a person to develop protection against the flu following their vaccination. During this time, there is still a risk of contracting

the flu if you come in contact with an infected person before your body mounts an immune response. It's also worth noting that the flu vaccine does not protect against all strains of the flu or other respiratory illness caused by viruses, such as the common cold.

## Can I catch influenza from the vaccine?

No. It is not possible to catch influenza from having the vaccine, as it contains only killed, inactivated virus particles. Because the virus is not live, it cannot spread through your respiratory system or cause illness like the real virus. The mild symptoms some people get after vaccination are usually related to the vaccine generating an immune response. This is how vaccines work — they train your immune system to recognise parts of the influenza virus, so it can respond when it encounters the real thing.

## How does the vaccine work?

Flu vaccines cause antibodies to develop in the body about two weeks after vaccination. These antibodies provide protection against infection with the viruses that are in the vaccine. The seasonal flu vaccine protects against the influenza viruses that research indicates will be most common during the upcoming season.

## Why do I need to get vaccinated against the flu every year?

There are two main reasons for getting a yearly flu vaccine:

1. Flu viruses change frequently and vaccines may be updated from one season to the next to protect against the most recent and common circulating strains.
2. A person's immune protection from influenza vaccination wanes over time.

## Does my child need 2 doses of flu vaccine?

If your child is aged 6 months to under 9 years, and getting the flu vaccination for the **first time this year**, it is recommended that they receive 2 doses, 1 month apart. The vaccine consumable is free this year for children between 6 months and less than 5 years.



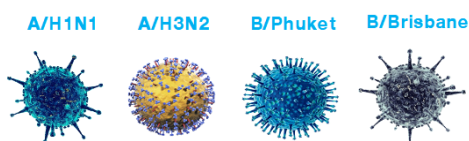
## Who decides on the composition of the vaccines each year?

Each year the World Health Organisation makes recommendations about which virus strains to include in vaccines for the coming year. The Australian Department of Health takes these recommendations into account when designing the Australian National Immunisation Program (NIP).

### 2018 vaccine composition for people aged 6 months to less than 65

This year, the recommended vaccine for people aged 6 months to less than 65 is a Quadrivalent, which means it includes the following four killed influenza virus strains:

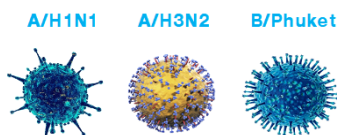
- A/Michigan/45/2015 (H1N1) pdm09-like virus
- A/Singapore/INFIMH-16-0019/2016 (H3N2)-like virus
- B/Phuket/3073/2013-like virus
- B/Brisbane/60/2008-like virus



### 2018 vaccine composition for people aged over 65

As you get older, your immune system weakens. As a result, research has found that the antibody response in older people after getting the traditional flu vaccine isn't as high as it is in younger people. For this reason, the government funded vaccine for people over 65 this year is different to that which is being offered to the rest of the community. It is a trivalent vaccine, **designed to provoke stronger immune response** and includes the following three killed influenza virus strains:

- A/Michigan/45/2015 (H1N1) pdm09-like virus
- A/Singapore/INFIMH-16-0019/2016 (H3N2)-like virus
- B/Phuket/3073/2013-like virus



## What are the possible side effects?

Common side effects following a flu vaccination include tenderness, fever, redness, pain and swelling at the injection site, vomiting and malaise. These side effects are usually mild and resolve within a few days, usually quickly without any treatment. Generally, reactions may occur within a few hours following vaccination and may last 1 to 2 days. Allergic reactions are uncommon after vaccination, but can be severe in some people. These reactions are due to an allergy to egg protein or to other components of the vaccine, including the antibiotics neomycin and polymyxin, which are in the vaccine in small amounts. Some severe allergic reactions can happen within 15 minutes. That is why it is important to wait in the practice for 15 minutes after being vaccinated.

### Should I receive the vaccine if I am unwell?

If you are suffering from an acute illness and have a fever (temperature equal to or above 38.5 °C) you should not receive the vaccine until you have fully recovered. If you are suffering from a mild illness and do not have a fever, there is no reason why you should not receive the vaccine. If you are feeling unwell at the time of your vaccination appointment, please discuss your symptoms with your doctor or the nurse.

## Is it safe to get the flu shot while pregnant?

Yes, the vaccine can be safely given during any stage of pregnancy. Pregnant people are at increased risk of severe disease or complications from the flu. Vaccinating against flu during pregnancy can not only protect pregnant people but can also provide ongoing protection to a newborn baby for the first six months after birth.

### When is the best time to get vaccinated?

Evidence suggests protection from the flu vaccine begins to wane 3-4 months after it is administered. Because peak flu season is expected to be in August this year, timing of your shot is important, which is why our clinics are scheduled for late April and May.

### How much does it cost to be vaccinated?

Costs vary depending whether you qualify for the free Government Funded vaccine consumable, however the most you will be out of pocket is \$20 to purchase the vaccine from us. A \$16.95 consult fee also applies for each patient, however Medicare will rebate this cost back to you in full. Check our website or talk to one of the team for more information.

### Further information

For further information on the flu vaccination program, please visit the following links:

<https://beta.health.gov.au/services/flu-influenza-immunisation-service>

<http://conditions.health.qld.gov.au/HealthCondition/condition/8/217/82/influenza-the-flu>

<https://beta.health.gov.au/topics/immunisation/immunisation-throughout-life/national-immunisation-program-schedule>

### Book your family into our dedicated flu vaccination clinics in April and May 2018

Our special clinics are running on the following dates:

- Saturday 21 April | 9am-12pm
- Thursday 26 April | 2pm-5pm
- Saturday 5 May | 9am-12pm
- Thursday 10 May | 2pm-5pm

**Call Deb or Kathy on 5301 9828 to book today.**  
**Appointments and private vaccine stock is limited.**

Some things deserve more time and attention.  
*We believe your health is one of them.*

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#### Information Sources

<https://beta.health.gov.au/services/flu-influenza-immunisation-service>

<http://www.immunise.health.gov.au/internet/immunise/publishing.nsf/content/home>

<https://www.ausvacs.com.au>