

## Who should receive the influenza vaccine?

Everyone six months and older is recommended to get an influenza vaccine each year.

Some people in our community are more vulnerable to the influenza virus and can suffer more serious complications from influenza. These people are eligible for free influenza vaccination through the **National Immunisation Program**:

- People aged 65 years and over
- Pregnant women (at any stage during pregnancy)
- All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 6 months and over
- All children aged 6 months to less than 5 years
- People aged 6 months and over with certain medical conditions that increase their chance of severe influenza and its complications.

*In some states and territories, influenza vaccines may also be provided for free to other people not listed above. Speak to your GP or visit your state or territory Department of Health website to find out.*

*If you are not eligible for a free vaccine, you can also purchase an influenza vaccine. Speak to your GP or other immunisation provider for more information.*

## The Australian Immunisation Register

Your immunisation provider is required to report all influenza vaccinations to the Register. This includes some personal information such as your name, date of birth, contact details, and your Medicare card number. Information on how the Department manages information reported to the Register is available at [health.gov.au](https://www.health.gov.au).

### Where can I get more information?

Speak to your GP or other immunisation provider about getting vaccinated against influenza.

Visit [health.gov.au/immunisation](https://www.health.gov.au/immunisation)



All information in this publication is correct as at March 2022.



# HELP STOP THE FLU IN 2022

## THIS YEAR, IT'S EVEN MORE IMPORTANT TO GET THE FLU VACCINE

## What is influenza?

Influenza is a highly contagious viral infection that can cause widespread illness and deaths every year.

Influenza viruses usually spread when an infected person coughs or sneezes. People may spread the virus before they know they are infected.

This year we are all more vulnerable to influenza due to lower recent exposure to the virus and lower uptake of influenza vaccines. With international borders reopening, it's likely we will see more influenza in 2022.

Symptoms of influenza infection usually come on suddenly and may include:

- **fever (high temperature)**
- **cough**
- **muscle or body aches**
- **fatigue (tiredness)**
- **headaches**
- **sore throat**
- **runny or stuffy nose**

Influenza infection is more serious in pregnant women, babies, older people, and people with chronic health conditions such as heart, lung or kidney diseases, or weakened immune systems.

However, even fit and healthy people, especially children, can get very sick from influenza. Influenza can cause a serious infection in the lungs and can make chronic health conditions worse. Some people can even die from influenza and its complications.

## The influenza vaccine

Vaccination is our best defence against influenza viruses. Even fit and healthy people should get the influenza vaccine to protect themselves and help to stop the spread of influenza.

Influenza vaccination prepares your immune system to fight influenza viruses. The influenza vaccine uses parts of killed viruses to create an immune response following vaccination. The influenza vaccine cannot give you influenza because it does not contain any live viruses.

The immunity provided by the vaccine can protect you from becoming sick if you get exposed to influenza in the community. This immunity can also reduce the severity of illness if you do get sick.

### Do I need to get vaccinated again if I was vaccinated last year?

*Yes. Influenza viruses are constantly changing, so the vaccines may be updated from one season to the next to protect against the types of viruses that research suggests will be common in the upcoming influenza season. Even if you had the 2021 influenza vaccine in late 2021 or early 2022, you are still recommended to receive a 2022 formulation of influenza vaccine when it becomes available.*

### Why do I need the influenza vaccine this year if there was hardly any influenza last season?

*During the COVID 19 pandemic there has been reduced circulation of influenza virus and lower levels of influenza vaccine coverage compared to previous years. With borders reopening a possible resurgence of influenza is expected.*

### When should I get vaccinated?

*Getting vaccinated every year before the peak influenza season (typically June to September) is recommended. However, it's never too late to be vaccinated as influenza can spread all year round.*

## Vaccination is the safest way to protect yourself and others from influenza viruses

The influenza vaccine has a great safety record.

Common side effects from the influenza vaccine include mild pain, redness or swelling where the vaccine is given. These side effects usually last for a few days and go away without any treatment.

Any medicine, including influenza vaccines, can have potentially serious side effects, such as a severe allergic reaction. However, these reactions are extremely rare.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### Can I get vaccinated if I have an egg allergy?

*Yes. People with an egg allergy, even an anaphylactic egg allergy, can safely have the influenza vaccine. Make sure you let your GP or other immunisation provider know that you have an egg allergy.*

### Sometimes people can get influenza even when they have been vaccinated why does this happen?

*The influenza vaccine, like all vaccines, is not 100% effective. This means that even when people are vaccinated against influenza, there is a chance they can still get infected. It is important to remember that influenza vaccination reduces the chance of getting influenza and may also reduce the seriousness of illness if people do get infected with the virus.*

### Can the influenza vaccine be given at the same visit as a COVID 19 vaccine?

*The influenza vaccine and COVID 19 vaccines can be safely administered at the same visit. The best way to protect yourself against getting both infections is to make sure you've had your influenza vaccine and are fully vaccinated against COVID 19.*