

2024 INFLUENZA GUIDE

FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS



ABOUT INFLUENZA

Influenza is a potentially fatal disease that is estimated to cause up to **1,000 deaths** and **51,000 hospitalisations** in Australia annually.^[1] However, these figures are likely to under-represent the real burden of influenza in Australia.

Healthcare professionals have an important role in prompting patients to consider the benefits of influenza vaccination and addressing concerns about its efficacy and safety.

This guide provides useful information about influenza and vaccination, along with tips on how to facilitate influenza vaccination programs in general practice.

PROVIDER RESOURCES FOR FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES

First Nations peoples are more likely to experience severe influenza.

The influenza vaccine is available for all First Nations peoples under the National Immunisation Program (NIP).

[New resources](#) are available to help providers talk to First Nations peoples about influenza vaccinations.

INFLUENZA AND THE NIP

Free influenza vaccine is available under the (NIP) for people in the following risk groups:



- Older adults (65+)
- Children aged between 6 months and less than 5 years old
- First Nations peoples aged 6 months and over
- Any stage of pregnancy
- People aged 6 months and over with medical conditions that can lead to complications from influenza (such as severe asthma, lung or heart disease, chronic neurological disease, renal and metabolic disease, and impaired immunity)^[2]

Health, age, lifestyle, and occupation (HALO) can also put people at high risk of influenza complications. These include:

- Obesity
- Stroke
- Tobacco smoking
- Down syndrome
- Residents of nursing homes and other long-term facilities
- Unhoused people

For more information about the NIP, visit: health.gov.au/immunisation or contact your state or territory health department

ACT (02) 6205 2300

SA 1300 232 272

WA (08) 9321 1312

NSW 1300 066 055

TAS 1800 671 738

QLD Contact your local Public Health Unit

NT (08) 8922 8044

VIC 1300 882 008

2024 INFLUENZA VACCINES AVAILABLE FOR USE IN AUSTRALIA

Remember to discard the prior year's influenza vaccine unless there is a good reason and they are still in date.

Discard 2023 influenza vaccines where possible as these are not manufactured to the latest seasonal influenza virus.

Seasonal influenza vaccines available for use in Australia in 2024, by age:^[2]

| | Vaxigrip Tetra - 0.5ml (Sanofi) | Fluarix Tetra - 0.5ml (GSK) | Afluria Quad - 0.5ml (Seqirus) | FluQuadri - 0.50ml (Sanofi) | Influvac Tetra - 0.5ml (Viatris) | Flucelvax Quad ^[#] - 0.5ml (Seqirus) | Fluad Quad - 0.5ml (Seqirus) | Fluzone High-Dose Quad - 0.7ml (Sanofi) |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|---|------------------------------|---|
| 6 to 24 Months (<2 Years) | * | * | X | | | | X | X |
| ≥2 to <5 Years | * | * | X | | | | X | X |
| ≥5 to <60 Years | ** | ** | | | | * | X | X |
| ≥60 to <65 Years | ** | ** | | | | * | X | |
| ≥65 Years | | | | | | | * | |

- Ages at which a vaccine is registered and available
- * Vaccine is funded under the NIP for eligible people
- ** NIP funding only for Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people, during pregnancy and people who have certain medical conditions
- X Vaccine is not available for that age group

TIMING OF VACCINATIONS

Vaccination is encouraged before and throughout the influenza season.



In Australia, the influenza season is officially recognised as starting in April. However, residents of northern Australia should be offered the new seasonal vaccines as soon as they become available. This also applies to your patients during their pregnancy.

Optimal protection against influenza occurs in the first 3–4 months after vaccination.^[3]

CO-ADMINISTRATION WITH OTHER VACCINES

Influenza vaccines can be administered at the same time as, or at any interval before or after, other vaccines.



This includes dTPa, DTPa, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), pneumococcal, and COVID-19 vaccines.^[1]

INFLUENZA AND COVID-19

COVID-19 and influenza are both serious respiratory infections. It is therefore essential that patients are immunised against influenza at the earliest opportunity, particularly those most at risk.



All COVID-19 vaccines can be co-administered with an influenza vaccine.^[3]

INFLUENZA AND PREGNANCY

Influenza is a potentially severe disease that can affect both the birth parent and baby. It can affect the birth parent in the second and third trimesters and the baby in the first few months after birth, even causing death.



Read more about influenza vaccination while pregnant [here](#).

INFLUENZA AND CHILDREN

The influenza vaccination is funded under the NIP for children aged between 6 months and <5 years for some vaccines.



The vaccines available for children under the NIP in this age group are:

- **Vaxigrip Tetra® 0.5mL** for those aged 6 months and older
- **Fluarix® Tetra 0.5mL** for those aged 6 months and older
- **Flucelvax®Quad 0.5mL** (from 5 years of age)

Other vaccines that are registered and available for children in 2024 but are not funded under the NIP are:

- **FluQuadri® 0.5mL** (all ages) will be available as a backup to Vaxigrip Tetra on the NIP
- **Influvac®Tetra 0.5mL** (all ages)
- **Afluria®Quad 0.5mL** (5 years and over)

ENHANCED INFLUENZA VACCINES FOR OLDER PEOPLE



There are 2 enhanced influenza vaccines available for older adults in 2024:

- **Flud® Quad 0.5mL** for people aged 65 and over (funded under the NIP)
- **Fluzone® High-Dose Quad 0.7mL** for people aged 60 and over (not funded under the NIP)

For people aged 65 and over, *Flud®Quad* is preferred over standard influenza vaccines. However, there is no preference between *Flud® Quad* and *Fluzone® High-Dose Quad*.^[2]

INFLUENZA AND HEART ATTACKS

Evidence from several studies indicates that annual vaccination against seasonal influenza reduces cardiovascular morbidity and mortality in patients with cardiovascular conditions. Studies suggest that the influenza vaccine almost halves the risk of heart attacks in older adults.^{[4][5]}



GPs who treat individuals with cardiovascular disease can help improve influenza vaccination coverage rates by asking about vaccination status, strongly recommending it, and providing vaccination to their patients before and throughout the influenza season.

REFERENCES

1. Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care. Influenza (flu). In the Australian Immunisation Handbook [Internet]. Canberra (ACT): Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care; 2023 [cited 23 Aug 2024]. Available from <https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au/contents/vaccine-preventable-diseases/influenza-flu#influenza-in-australia>
2. ATAGI Advice on Season Influenza Vaccines in 2024 <https://www.health.gov.au/sites/default/files/2024-02/atagi-statement-on-the-administration-of-seasonal-influenza-vaccines-in-2024.pdf> Published March 2024
3. Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care. Influenza (flu). In: Australian Immunisation Handbook [Internet]. Canberra (ACT): Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care; 2023 [cited 23 Aug 2024]. Available from <https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au/contents/vaccine-preventable-diseases/influenza-flu#timing-of-influenza-vaccination>
4. MacIntyre CR, Heywood AE, Kovoov P, Ridda I, Seale H, Tan T, et al. Ischaemic heart disease, influenza and influenza vaccination: a prospective case control study. *Heart*. 2013;99(23):1843-8.
5. Barnes M, Heywood AE, Mahimbo A, Rahman B, Newall AT, Macintyre CR. Acute myocardial infarction and influenza: a meta-analysis of case-control studies. *Heart*. 2015;101(21):1738-47.