



Frequently Asked Questions

What is influenza?

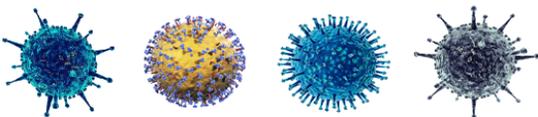
Influenza, commonly called “the flu”, is a contagious disease caused by a virus which spreads easily from person to person. Compared with other viral respiratory infections such as the common cold, influenza infection can cause severe illness and can also precipitate serious and life-threatening complications. Influenza viruses infect many parts of the body, including the nose, throat and lungs. Influenza symptoms include fever, cough, sore throat, fatigue, muscle aches, headaches, runny nose and watery eyes. Although the fever and body aches usually last for 3 – 5 days, coughing and fatigue can persist for two weeks or more.

What vaccines do we use this year?

The influenza vaccine virus strains selected by the World Health Organisation for the 2018 Northern Hemisphere influenza season were chosen with the goals of providing the broader possible coverage and making the vaccine more effective than the 2018 vaccine was.

Quadrivalent Influenza vaccines include two influenza type A and two influenza type B lineage viruses. This is the same type of vaccine the Government are using as part of the National Program to fight influenza in Australia.

A/H1N1 A/H3N2 B/Phuket B/Brisbane



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

3 things you might not know about the flu shot!

- There is no live virus in the flu shot
- The composition of the vaccine changes every year
- The flu shot is safe for pregnant women at all stages of their pregnancy

How effective is the influenza vaccine?

The influenza vaccine provides a good level of protection which is 70% - 90% effective in healthy adults. It is important to know that it takes around two weeks after vaccination for a person to develop protection against influenza infection. Also, the influenza vaccine does not protect against respiratory illness caused by other viruses, such as the common cold.

Can I catch influenza from the vaccine?

No. It is impossible to “catch” influenza from the vaccine. The influenza vaccine contains only “killed”, inactivated virus particles. Because the virus particles are not live, they cannot spread through your respiratory system or cause illness like the real virus.

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.

What are the benefits of flu vaccinations?

There are lots of reasons to get a flu vaccine each year. Flu vaccination can keep you from getting sick from flu. Protecting yourself from flu also protects the people around you who are more vulnerable to serious flu illness.

Flu vaccination can help protect people who are at greater risk of getting seriously ill from flu, like older adults, people with chronic health conditions and young children (especially infants younger than 6 months old who are too young to get vaccinated).

Flu vaccination also may make your illness milder if you do get sick.

Flu vaccination can reduce the risk of more serious flu outcomes, like hospitalizations and deaths.

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

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

- Flu viruses are frequently changing and vaccines may be updated from one season to the next to protect against the most recent and common circulating strains.
- A person's immune protection from influenza vaccination declines over time and annual vaccination is recommended.

What are the possible side effects from the flu shot?

Common side effects following seasonal flu vaccination include soreness, 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 allocated area for 15 minutes after being vaccinated.

Is it safe for me to get the flu shot if I am pregnant?

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

If in doubt, please speak to your doctor to confirm it's safe to continue.



Should I receive the vaccine if I am feeling unwell?

If you are suffering from an acute feverish illness (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 the nurse.

If I get a side effect after I have a flu vaccine, where can I report it?

You can report adverse events to us (AVS) on 02 8097 0753 and your doctor. Side effects or adverse events following any immunisation can also be reported to the Therapeutic Goods Administration by calling the Adverse Medicine Events Line on 1300 134 237 or lodging a report online at the TG website, via the 'report a problem link'. AVS is keen to assist with this process as it is important to record adverse reactions.

Further information

If you would like further information on the vaccine and the flu vaccination program, please click on the below links:

Dept. of Health Influenza Surveillance Report
Patient Information Flyer
Flu Vaccination Poster
Flu Vaccination Post Vaccination Brochure

