

Influenza Vaccination FAQ 2024



What is influenza?

Influenza, commonly known as the flu, is caused by a virus, and mainly spreads from person to person through the air by coughing, sneezing or talking, and by touching a person's hands, surface, or object.

The flu virus infects your respiratory system such as the nose, throat and sometimes your lungs. It differs from a cold as symptoms such as fever, sore throat and muscle aches develop suddenly and last about a week. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can cause complications such as pneumonia and bronchitis which require hospitalisation. Sometimes these complications can lead to death. This is opposed to a 'cold' With Flu you are usually very unwell.

Flu can also make some underlying medical conditions worse. There is a need to get vaccinated every year because the viruses circulating in the community continually change and immunity from the vaccine does not last a long time. It is especially important that people at risk be vaccinated each year.

2024 Strains

Quadrivalent (4 strain)
A/Victoria/4897/2022 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus (A/Victoria/4897/2022 IVR-238)
A/Thailand/8/2022 (H3N2)-like virus (A/Thailand/8/2022 IVR-237)
B/Austria/1359417/2021-like virus (B/Austria/1359417/2021 BVR-26)
B/Phuket/3073/2013-like virus (B/Phuket/3073/2013 BVR-1B)

Who should not be given an Influenza Vaccine?

If you have had ANAPHYLAXIS to any previous influenza vaccine

If you have had ANAPHYLAXIS to any component of an influenza vaccine

Discuss with the vaccination nurse if you have ever had an allergy to eggs, gentamycin, neomycin, polymycin or are receiving immune-oncology therapy

People who should talk to their doctor before getting the flu shot:

If you ever had Guillain-Barre Syndrome (a severe paralysing illness, also called GBS). Some people with a history of GBS should not get this vaccine. Talk to your doctor about your GBS history.

If you are receiving immune-oncology therapy or on corticosteroids

Yes, you are able to receive the vaccine if:

You are presently on antibiotics

You are allergic to penicillin. Be sure to tell vaccinator of any allergies though.

Can I catch the Flu from the Flu Shot?

No, it is impossible to catch the flu from the flu shots. It contains a small amount of 'dead' virus. Dead Virus can no way replicate in your body and make you sick. This 'dead' or inactivated virus is enough for your body to develop antibodies to it and then be able to fight the 'live' version if it invades your body. Full Immunisation can take from 3 days to 2 weeks for effect.

Best ways to avoid the Flu:

Immunisation
Hand washing
Avoid touching shared surfaces and then touching your mouth, eyes, or nose.

I received a flu shot last year, do I still need to get one this year?

Yes. Immunity decreases over time and flu vaccination is needed each year to ensure you continue to be protected. Vaccination is recommended in early autumn to allow time for immunity to be strengthened before the flu season starts. The influenza strains change each year. In the Northern Hemisphere they diagnose the common strains of flu in their winter and make the new vaccine accordingly. Expectations are the Northern Hemisphere flu will be heading to the Southern Hemisphere for our winter

Are there any side effects with the flu vaccine?

Vaccines, like other medicines, can have side effects, however the majority of side effects are minor.

Common side effects following flu vaccination include soreness, redness, pain and swelling at the injection site, fever, and malaise. These side effects are usually mild and resolve within a few days, usually without any treatment. You should contact your doctor if you are concerned. Nurofen and Panadol should alleviate these symptoms.

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.

The Flu shot for over 65's

The Government provides a free flu shot program to over 65's and Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders. This is a 3-strain vaccine, but at 4 X the dose. To access this vaccine, it is only available from your GP due to being on the 'free' list. It is not available to the private market for sale. If you are over 65 you may still have the regular 4 strain vaccine. Consult your GP if unsure.

Procedure of being vaccinated:

The Health Department advises that it is not necessary to wipe the skin with an alcohol swab or other cleaning agent before vaccination. This is due to a risk of the cleaning agent damaging the vaccine. The exception is if somebody is visibly dirty. Then swabbing is done but must be allowed to dry. The Doctor or Nurse may elect to not wear gloves but use hand sanitiser in between patients. This is acceptable.