

# Free flu vaccination for children aged six months to under five years

The Tasmanian Government has announced a program in 2018 to ensure free flu vaccine is available for **all** children in Tasmania aged six months to less than five years.

## **Why are children being offered flu vaccine?**

Children less than five years of age are more likely to get severe flu infections. They are more likely to require hospitalisation, and sometimes the flu can even be fatal.

## **Where can my child get the free vaccine?**

Every child aged between six months and less than five years is eligible for the free vaccine. It is available from your GP or some local council immunisation sessions.

Although the flu vaccine is free you may need to pay a consultation fee.

## **Is flu vaccine for children a new recommendation?**

No. Flu vaccine has been recommended for all Australian children from six months to less than five years since 2013. This is the first year it has been funded. Other states are offering the same program.

## **Is the flu vaccine safe for children?**

Yes. All vaccines, including flu vaccine are registered and monitored nationally by the Therapeutic Goods Administration.

The flu vaccine is safely given to tens of thousands of Australian children each year.

## **Are there side effects?**

Some children have mild side effects after receiving the flu vaccine, such as soreness or redness at the injection site, low fever or muscle aches.

If mild reactions do occur, they generally go away within a few days.

Talk to your immunisation provider about what to expect and how you can manage them if they do occur.

Seek medical attention if your child has a serious reaction to the flu vaccine. Please also report this event to the Public Health Hotline – Tasmania on **1800 671 738**.

## **Can the flu vaccine be given with other childhood vaccines?**

Yes. However, for six month olds, there is a small increased risk of fever when the flu vaccine is given with Prevenar 13, one of the regular childhood vaccines given at six months of age.

Please discuss with your GP if you are concerned.

## **Can the flu vaccine give children the flu?**

No. Australian flu vaccines can never give someone the flu. There is no live virus in these vaccines.

## **How many doses does my child need?**

All children under nine years of age need a second dose of vaccine the first time they have a flu vaccine. Leave at least four weeks between the two doses. Only one dose is required every year after that.

## **When should my child have the flu vaccine?**

Flu is most common from June until September and it is best to be vaccinated before this time. Being vaccinated from April gives the best protection for the peak flu period.

Children who require two doses should be vaccinated as soon as the vaccine is available (April) to ensure they receive both doses before the flu season commences.

## **My child is allergic to eggs, can they still have the flu vaccine?**

Talk to your doctor about your child having the flu vaccine if they have a severe egg allergy.

Most types of flu vaccine contain a small amount of egg protein. If your child has a mild egg allergy, he or she can receive the flu vaccine without any additional precautions. If they have a severe egg allergy, they should be vaccinated by a healthcare provider experienced in recognising and managing severe allergic conditions.

## **How else can I help protect my children against flu?**

The best way to prevent flu is to have the flu vaccine.

The vaccine is required each year because the flu virus is constantly changing.

Good habits can also reduce the chance of getting flu or passing it to others. These include:

- regular hand washing with soap and water
- not sharing personal items such as cups
- cover your mouth when you cough or sneeze.

If your child is five years and older and not eligible for a free vaccine talk to your GP about purchasing the vaccine.

## **I was vaccinated while pregnant; does my child still need the flu vaccine?**

Flu vaccination during pregnancy is an important way to help protect yourself, and your child in the first few months of their life. Unfortunately, the protection for your baby does not last beyond six months of age and it is recommended that children from this age are vaccinated for flu.

## **For further information please:**

- Speak to your doctor or clinic nurse
- See the DHHS Influenza website [www.flu.tas.gov.au](http://www.flu.tas.gov.au)
- Call the Public Health Hotline - Tasmania on **1800 671 738**
- Call Immunise Australia on 1800 671 811 or go to [www.immunise.health.gov.au](http://www.immunise.health.gov.au)

## **Adverse event reporting**

**To report a serious adverse event following the flu immunisation in a child aged between six months and under five years, please call the Public Health Hotline – Tasmania on 1800 671 738.**

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