

# Free Influenza (flu) vaccine for children 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.

## **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.

## **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 should have two doses at least four weeks apart in the first year of receiving the flu vaccine. Both doses are funded. In subsequent years, one dose of vaccine per year is required.

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

Flu is most common from June until September. Being immunised from mid-April gives the best protection for the peak flu period. Receiving a second dose later in the season is not recommended as there is no evidence that this is effective or safe. The only exception is for children receiving flu vaccine for the first time, where they require two doses four weeks apart in the first year of receiving flu vaccine (as described above).

Children who require two doses should be immunised when the vaccine becomes available (April) so they can receive both doses before the flu season begins.

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

Most types of flu vaccine contain a very small amount of egg protein.

If your child has a mild egg allergy, they can have the flu vaccine without any additional precautions.

If they have a severe egg allergy, they should be immunised by a healthcare provider experienced in recognising and managing severe allergic conditions.

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

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

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

You need to have the flu vaccine 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 immunised while pregnant; does my child still need the flu vaccine?**

Flu immunisation 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 immunised for flu.

### **For further information please:**

- Speak to your doctor or clinic nurse
- Visit [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 visit [www.health.gov.au/health-topics/flu-influenza](http://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/flu-influenza)
- Influenza Immunisation Advice [www.health.gov.au/health-topics/immunisation/immunisation-services/flu-influenza-immunisation-service](http://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/immunisation/immunisation-services/flu-influenza-immunisation-service)

03 June 2020