

People medically at-risk and the flu

Does your medical condition put you at greater risk of severe flu?

Flu (influenza) is a viral illness that mainly affects the respiratory system (nose, throat and lungs). Most people recover within a week but for some it can lead to a severe and life-threatening illness.

Some medical conditions are associated with a greater risk of severe flu. These medical conditions include:

- heart disease
- severe asthma (requiring frequent medical consultations or use of multiple medications)
- chronic lung conditions (eg COPD or chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
- diseases of the nervous system (eg multiple sclerosis)
- a weakened immune system due to disease or treatment
- diabetes
- chronic kidney failure
- blood disorders.

A flu shot every year is the best way to prevent flu. The flu vaccine is free for at-risk groups.

All people from six months of age in medically at-risk groups are strongly recommended to have a free flu vaccine every year (provided under the National Immunisation Program).

To get a free flu vaccine make an appointment with your General Practitioner.

When is the best time to get the flu vaccine?

Flu is most common from June until September. The best time to get your vaccine is from mid-April as vaccine protection is greatest for three to four months after receiving the vaccine.

Receiving a second dose later in the season is not recommended as there is no evidence that this is effective or safe.

Other ways to help prevent flu

Wash your hands often to get rid of the germs you may have picked up. Use soap and water, or an alcohol-based hand rub.

If you get sick- don't share it!

- When you cough or sneeze cover your mouth with your elbow.
- Stay home from work and let someone know you are sick. If your child is unwell do not send them to childcare or school.
- Avoid visiting people likely to get unwell from flu. This includes young children, pregnant women, those with medical problems and the elderly.
- Avoid visiting family or friends in hospital or aged-care homes.
- Stay at least 1.5 metres away from other people, especially when coughing.
- Call ahead if you need to see a doctor. The medical service may plan your visit to prevent infection spreading to others.

For more information

- Speak to your doctor or practice nurse
- 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
- Influenza Immunisation Advice www.health.gov.au/health-topics/immunisation/immunisation-services/flu-influenza-immunisation-service-0

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