

## 2020 Influenza Vaccination

### Mandatory requirement for anyone who need to work or visit residential aged care facility

Please be advised that Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison has announced on Monday 16<sup>th</sup> March 2020 that **all people** entering residential aged care facilities after 1<sup>st</sup> May 2020 **must** have received the 2020 influenza vaccination.

Annual vaccination is the most important measure to prevent influenza and its complications. It is recommended for all people aged 6 months and over (unless the person can provide medical certificate stating he or she is contraindicated). NSW Health Minister Brad Hazzard said that although the flu vaccine won't combat COVID-19, it would help to reduce the severity and spread of seasonal influenza, which can lower a person's immunity and make them susceptible to other illnesses.

### Who should get vaccinated?

The Australian Government recommends everyone aged six months and over get immunised against seasonal flu.

Influenza is the most common preventable disease in Australia, and while it tends to cause mild symptoms, it can also cause very serious illness in otherwise healthy people — and lead to hospitalisation and even death.

Vaccination is a safe and effective way to protect yourself, and people who get vaccinated are at lower risk of getting an infection (and developing serious disease) than those who do not.

The benefits go beyond the individual, too. Getting a flu shot also means you help to protect others, including those who are too sick or too young to be vaccinated, as well as vulnerable groups such as babies, people over 65 years, and pregnant women.

The more people who are vaccinated in the community, the less likely the flu will spread. Therefore, ANHF is encouraging all community or residential care workers to participate in the 2020 National Immunisation Program for Influenza.

### Vaccine strains

The Australian Influenza Vaccine Committee recommendation for the composition of influenza vaccines for Australia in 2020 introduces three new strains when compared to the composition of the trivalent and quadrivalent vaccines for Australia in 2019: a new A (H1N1) like virus strain, a new A (H3N2) like virus strain and new strain for the B Victoria lineage.

Quadrivalent influenza vaccines:

- an A/Brisbane/02/2018 (H1N1) pdm09-like virus
- an A/South Australia/34/2019 (H3N2)-like virus
- a B/Washington/02/2019-like (B/Victoria lineage) virus
- a B/Phuket/3073/2013-like (B/Yamagata lineage) virus

## Who's eligible for a free vaccine?

Under the Federal Government's [National Immunisation Program](#), there are some people that are eligible for a free flu vaccine because they are most at risk of poor outcomes. This includes:

- Children aged six months to five years (this is new in 2020)
- Pregnant women (during any stage of pregnancy)
- People aged 65 years and over
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 6 months and over
- People aged six months and over with medical conditions that mean they have a higher risk of flu complications (e.g. those with diabetes, severe asthma, lung or heart disease).

## When should you get vaccinated?

- Timing, as they say, is everything — and the flu vaccination is no exception. It's important to be protected early on when the flu season kicks off, but also several months later, when flu activity peaks.
- While the vaccine is generally expected to provide you immunity for the whole season, research shows its effectiveness can start to wane after three to four months.
- In order to achieve the highest level of protection during peak flu season, the Department of Health recommends people get vaccinated from mid-April.
- While Government-subsidised vaccines for at-risk people will be made available in mid-April, the general public will be able to access flu vaccinations (for a cost between \$15-\$20) from mid-March at pharmacies, and from April at GPs.
- Health authorities wanted to avoid people presenting to their local hospital or GP with seasonal flu, which could put them at increased risk of catching another virus, including coronavirus.
- In the unfortunate event for anyone getting coronavirus, it helps the doctor to diagnose quicker if they know the person has already been vaccinated against Influenza.

## How to get Influenza vaccine?

- In most cases the flu vaccine is available through your local GP (when you may or may not need to pay for it depending on your meeting the free vaccine criteria). Immunisation services can also be accessed at pharmacies, community health clinics, Aboriginal Medical Services, through school-based immunisation programs, and at your workplace.