

What is it?

The influenza (flu) vaccine protects against the flu. The vaccine helps reduce the risk of getting sick with the flu and spreading it. Some people, like those with severe health issues, are more at risk of getting sick from the flu.

The flu virus changes every year, so a new flu vaccine is made yearly to protect against the most common strains experts expect to see that year. Your GP may suggest you get the vaccine before the onset of each flu season.

Flu season generally runs from June to September. The newest flu vaccine is often ready from April.

What do I need to do to prepare?

There is nothing you need to do to prepare for your flu vaccine. The flu vaccine is free for:

- All children aged six months to under five years
- People aged 65 years and older
- Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people aged six months and older
- Pregnant women
- People aged five years and over with health issues that may lead to serious flu

You are the most immune in the first three-to-four months after you have had the vaccine.

What will happen?

The most common way to get the flu vaccine is through your GP. Some other health services and places of work may also provide the vaccine. Before you have the flu vaccine, your GP may:

- Discuss side effects
- Check your health
- Obtain your consent

They will then give you the vaccine according to the recommended dose.

The vaccine is given in the upper arm, or in the thigh for babies. Children younger than nine who are getting the vaccine for the first time need two doses, given at least four weeks apart.

As the flu vaccine is not a live vaccine, it can be given with other vaccines, such as the COVID-19 vaccine. Your GP may ask you to stay for 15 minutes after you have had the vaccine to check for any ill reactions.

Where can I learn more?

- **National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS)** – Influenza Vaccine for Australians Factsheet: ncirs.org.au
- **Department of Health and Aged Care** - Influenza vaccine: health.gov.au
- **NSW Health:**
 - Pregnant women and influenza: health.nsw.gov.au
 - The flu shot is your best protection against severe flu: health.nsw.gov.au