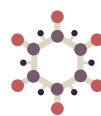


the 2017 influenza guide for general practitioners

Influenza virus strains can change from year to year – this is why it is important to have a yearly influenza vaccination.



IMMUNISATION
COALITION



ISG
Influenza Specialist Group



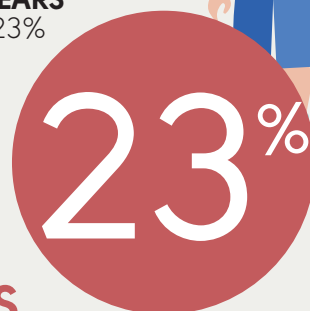
Influenza is a potentially fatal disease that is estimated to cause more deaths than accidents on roads: 1500–3500 influenza deaths annually.

CONFIRMED CASES IN 2016¹
90,861

90,861¹ Australians suffered in 2016 from laboratory confirmed influenza. It is estimated that lab confirmed influenza only represents the **TIP OF THE ICEBERG** in the community.

CHILDREN

In 2016 **CHILDREN AGED LESS THAN 15 YEARS** accounted for 23% of all influenza notifications¹.



RISK FACTORS

10% of influenza patients were admitted directly to ICU².

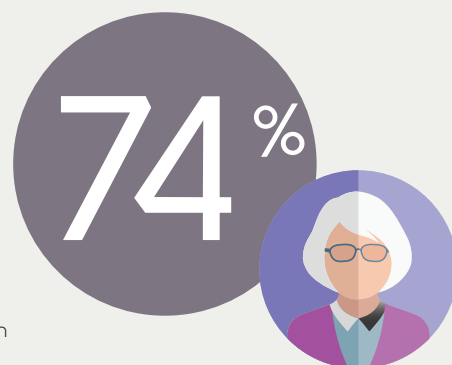
ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER PEOPLES and **PREGNANT WOMEN** were at the biggest risk to end up in ICU².

Overall 74% of people who ended up in hospital had significant risk factors, and the presence of risk factors increases with **AGE**².



HOSPITALISATIONS

Influenza in Australia results in more than **18,000 hospitalisations** each year³.



RISKS OF INFLUENZA:

HOSPITALISATION
EXACERBATION
DEATH

- 1 National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System at 31 December 2016.
- 2 Australian Influenza Surveillance Report No.11, 2016
- 3 Newall, A et al. Economic report into the cost of influenza to the Australian health system. March 2007.

VACCINATION HELPS TO:

- Prevent infection
- Protect against non-communicable diseases
- Protect against complications from existing non-communicable diseases

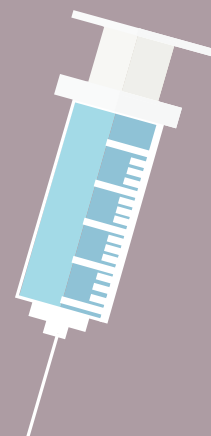
Doctors influence the decision to be vaccinated

A 2016 Immunisation Coalition study showed that more than half the people who got a flu shot in 2016 made their decision based on the recommendation of their GP.

You play an active role in protecting thousands of Australians who are at risk of influenza complications. Advise your patients on the benefits of a flu shot.

These steps can help facilitate influenza vaccination programs in general practice:

- **FLAG RECORDS** of patients at increased risk of influenza complications.
- **REMIND PATIENTS** of the benefits of vaccination.
- **ORGANISE VACCINATION CLINICS.**



Who should be vaccinated?



The Immunisation Coalition strongly supports annual vaccination of all those at risk of complications from influenza and of anyone over 6 months of age wishing to avoid infection, as recommended in the Australian Immunisation Handbook 10th Edition, available on the Immunise Australia website: www.immunise.health.gov.au

Free influenza vaccine is available under the National Immunisation Program (NIP) for people in the following risk groups:

- **Older adults** (65+)
- **Indigenous Australians** (6 months to <5 years and 15+)
- **Pregnant women**
- People aged 6 months and over with **medical conditions that can lead to complications from influenza** (such as severe asthma, lung or heart disease, chronic neurological disease, renal and metabolic disease, and impaired immunity).

Details of the current seasonal influenza vaccination program are available on the Immunise Australia website: www.immunise.health.gov.au

Other conditions that might put people at a high risk of influenza complications include:

- **Obesity**
- **Stroke**
- **Tobacco smoking**
- **Down syndrome**
- **Residents of nursing homes and other longterm facilities**
- **Homeless people**

These are not funded to receive free influenza vaccination.

Timing of vaccination for elderly patients

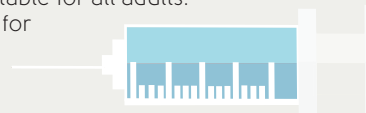


Vaccination is encouraged throughout the influenza season and in some settings such as pregnant women and residents of northern Australia, this should occur as soon as vaccine is available.

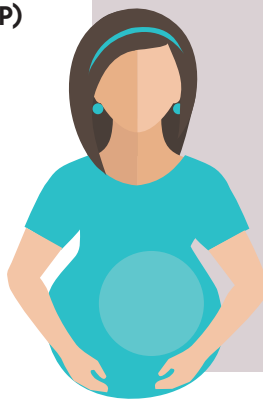
The duration of protection for elderly people and residents of nursing homes is shorter, perhaps only six months, so it is important not to vaccinate them too early. While opportunistic vaccination is always important, dedicated clinics for elderly patients should occur in mid-late April.

Which vaccines will be available in 2017?

The quadrivalent vaccine will be available under the NIP and in the private market and is suitable for all adults. Specific brands are recommended for use in children over the age of 6 months (see *Influenza and children* below).



Influenza and pregnancy



"VACCINATING PREGNANT WOMEN against influenza gives a 3 for 1 benefit:

- protects the woman during pregnancy and in the early months of motherhood
- protects the young infant by trans-placental antibodies
- protects the young infant by antibodies in breast milk."

ELIZABETH MCCARTHY, Senior Lecturer, Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, University of Melbourne, Perinatal Centre, Mercy Hospital for Women

Influenza and heart attacks



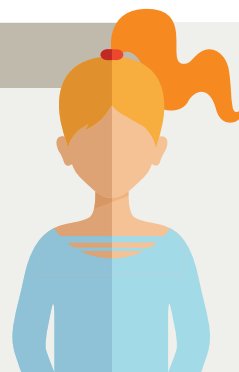
"Current research suggests that the flu shot seems to almost **HALVE THE RISK OF HEART ATTACKS** in middle-aged people with narrowed arteries. The study adds to evidence that influenza vaccine could be protective against heart attacks and cardiovascular disease, which is the leading cause of death globally and in Australia."

PROFESSOR RAINA MACINTYRE, Head of the School of Public Health and Community Medicine, Faculty of Medicine at the University of New South Wales and Professor of Infectious Diseases Epidemiology

Influenza and children

Children with underlying medical conditions are at particular risk of severe complications from influenza and may be entitled to free vaccine under the NIP. The two vaccines available for children this season are:

- **FluarixTetra® (GlaxoSmithKline)** for children aged three and over
- **FluQuadri Junior® (Sanofi Pasteur)** for children aged six months to less than three years.





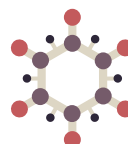
It's never too late to vaccinate.

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The Immunisation Coalition is a not for profit advocacy group with a mission to create awareness regarding the importance of immunisation. Immunisation still provides the best protection against infectious diseases. We work with consumers, health professionals and organisations with an interest in immunisation and government health agencies, ensuring that the information provided to consumers through our website and other communication channels is current, easily understood and scientifically informed.

Visit www.immunisationcoalition.org.au and www.flusmart.org.au

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