

the 2016 influenza guide for general practitioners



ISG

Influenza Specialist Group

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

Influenza is a potentially fatal disease that is estimated to cause MORE DEATHS than accidents on roads:

1500–3500
INFLUENZA DEATHS ANNUALLY

100,569 Australians suffered in 2015 from laboratory confirmed influenza. It is estimated that lab confirmed influenza only represents the **TIP OF THE ICEBERG** in the community.

NNDSS+

100,569

NNDSS+

Influenza in Australia results in more than **18,000 HOSPITALISATIONS** each year.

Notification rates have been highest amongst those **CHILDREN UNDER 10** (25%). People aged **35 TO 44 YEARS** amount to 11.5%. (Age-specific incidence varies from year to year.)

NNDSS+

In 2015 **CHILDREN AGED LESS THAN 15 YEARS** accounted for one third of all influenza notifications.

The rate of **CHILDREN** hospitalised with lab confirmed influenza who had to be **ADMITTED DIRECTLY TO ICU** in 2015 was 9%.

11.5%

25%

RISKS OF INFLUENZA

HOSPITALISATION
EXACERBATION
DEATH

BENEFITS OF VACCINATION

PREVENT
INFECTION

PROTECT
AGAINST NCDs*

PROTECT
AGAINST
COMPLICATIONS
FROM EXISTING
NCDs*

* non-communicable diseases, e.g. heart attack, stroke

+ Figures quoted from National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System at 31 December 2015.

Doctors are key influencers in people getting their influenza vaccination.

A 2015 ISG study showed that 54% of people who had a flu shot made the decision based on the recommendation of their GP.

YOU CAN HELP TO PROTECT thousands of Australians who are at risk of influenza complications. Advise them of 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 ISG 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. <http://www.immunise.health.gov.au/internet/immunise/publishing.nsf/Content/Handbook10-home>

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/internet/immunise/publishing.nsf/Content/nips

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

- **Obesity**
- **Stroke**
- **Tobacco smoking**
- **Down syndrome**



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

"New 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



WHICH VACCINES WILL BE AVAILABLE IN 2016?

National Immunisation Program (NIP)

The quadrivalent (QIV) vaccine will be available from autumn 2016 through the NIP and will consist of 4 strains: A(H1N1), A(H3N2), B/ Brisbane, B/Phuket.

- **FluarixTetra® (GlaxoSmithKline)** for people aged three and over
- **FluQuadri Junior® (Sanofi Pasteur)** for children under three.

Private market (for those not covered by the NIP)

In 2016 both the TIV and QIV will be available in the private market, and either is suitable for use in adults. Specific brands are recommended for use in children over the age of 6 months (see Influenza and children on this page).

Which vaccine is preferred?

Surveillance data indicates that, in some influenza seasons, QIV should provide better coverage than TIV against influenza B because the type B lineage(s) that circulate in any given season are not totally predictable. However, the degree to which QIV will translate into additional clinical protection for patients when compared to TIV remains to be demonstrated clinically. TIV vaccine will provide equal protection against the 3 strains common to both TIV & QIV in any particular season and is therefore preferred over delayed or non-vaccination. Delaying vaccination may lead to people missing out on vaccination and the undesirable outcome of lower coverage across the community.

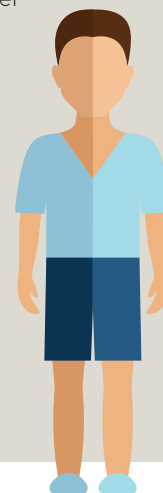
Influenza and children

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 QIVs available under the NIP for this season are:

- **FluarixTetra® (GlaxoSmithKline)** for children aged three and over
- **FluQuadri Junior® (Sanofi Pasteur)** for children under three.

Trivalent vaccines for children are not covered by the NIP, but are available in the private market.

- **Influvac® (BGP Products)** is approved by the Therapeutics Goods Administration (TGA) for children aged 6 months and older.
- **Fluvax® (Seqirus)** is not approved by the (TGA) for use in children less than 5 years of age and must not be given to this group. While Fluvax® is registered by the TGA for administration in children ≥5 years of age, it is not recommended for use in children <9 years of age (refer to the Immunisation Handbook: www.immunise.health.gov.au/internet/immunise/publishing.nsf/Content/Handbook10-home).



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The Influenza Specialist Group (ISG) is a professional not-for-profit advocacy group and Australia's leading expert body on influenza. The ISG works with key Australian professional and consumer groups, and with Australian Federal, State and Territory departments of Health and their educational program leaders to create awareness for influenza, its prevention and treatment.

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