

# Flu vaccine information

Please read carefully before providing your consent to have the flu vaccine.

## Why should I get the flu vaccine?

Influenza vaccine is recommended for anyone who wishes to reduce their chance of becoming ill with the influenza (flu) virus. Flu is a contagious disease that spreads around Australia, usually between April and August. It is spread mainly by coughing, sneezing and close contact.

Flu can last several days and comes on suddenly. Symptoms include fever/chills, sore throat, muscle aches, fatigue, cough, headache, stuffy nose. It can also lead to pneumonia and make those with underlying medical conditions very sick.

The flu vaccine can stop you from getting the flu; make flu less severe if you do get it, and importantly can stop you from spreading it to your family, co-workers and others.

## What is in the flu vaccine?

Each year a new flu vaccine is made to protect against the 4 viruses most likely to cause disease in the next flu season. This quadrivalent vaccine contains fragments of the 4 different types of killed influenza virus strains recommended by the World Health Organisation. These vaccines do not contain live virus so therefore cannot cause the flu. The vaccines used in Work Health Professionals' flu vaccination programs this year are FLUARIX TETRA, AFLURIA, INFLUVAC TETRA and FLU QUADRI.

## How does the flu vaccine work?

The vaccine works by stimulating your body to protect itself against infection by the influenza viruses by making substances called antibodies. Antibodies fight the influenza virus. It takes about 2 weeks for antibody protection to develop after your vaccination.

## Points you must discuss with your vaccination nurse:

1. Have you ever had a severe allergic reaction following a previous dose of influenza vaccine?
2. Have you ever had a severe neurologic condition called Guillain-Barre Syndrome (GBS)?
  - GBS is an autoimmune syndrome caused by your body's own immune system. GBS may make you feel weak; you may have difficulty moving around or you may experience numbness and tingling
3. Any allergy to eggs?

## Pregnancy

The influenza vaccine can be given at any time during pregnancy. Protecting women during their second and third trimesters is a priority because this is the time when serious complications from influenza are more likely to occur. WHP are happy to vaccinate women who are greater than 12 weeks pregnant. Prior to this we recommend you see your GP.

The flu vaccination is the best way to protect you and your unborn baby. After the vaccination your body makes antibodies that help protect you and your baby from the flu. Your baby will continue to be protected for up to six months after birth. That's important because babies under six months cannot be given the flu vaccination; protection can only be achieved by vaccinating a mother during pregnancy. Infants less than six months of age are up to ten times more likely to go to hospital with influenza than older children.

## **Breastfeeding**

If you are breastfeeding, antibodies made in response to your influenza vaccination may also be passed in breast milk and provide additional protection to your newborn.

## **Risks of a reaction to the vaccine**

Most side effects to the flu vaccine are mild and short-lived.

Common side effects may include pain, redness and swelling at the injection site. Fever, tiredness and muscle aches and pains may also occur. These side effects can start several hours after vaccination and may last one to two days. Post vaccination symptoms may seem like influenza infection, but the injectable vaccine does not contain any live virus and therefore cannot give you 'the flu'.

Serious reactions following influenza vaccination are rare. As with any medicine, there is a very remote chance of a vaccine causing a serious injury or death. Look for signs of a severe allergic reaction such as difficulty breathing, swelling of the face or throat, hives, a faster heartbeat, dizziness and weakness. These usually come on within a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination.

## **Post Vaccination Waiting Period**

As per medical protocols, as a precaution, you will be asked to wait in the supervised vicinity of the immunisation clinic for 15 minutes after your vaccination.

Tell your vaccination nurse if you feel dizzy, short of breath, have vision changes or ringing in the ears. People sometimes faint after vaccination, so sitting or lying down for about 15 minutes can help prevent this.

## **What to do in the event of side effects?**

Paracetamol can be beneficial for mild fever or pain and a cool damp cloth can also reduce pain at the injection site. Contact your Doctor if you have any other concerns.

Health Direct is also available on 1800 022 222 should you need any further advice. For any severe reaction, call an ambulance 000 or go to your closest emergency department.

## **Timing between Covid-19 vaccination and flu vaccination**

The preferred minimum interval between having your flu vaccination and any Covid vaccination is 7 days, however they can be given closer together if this is not possible.

## **Registering your flu vaccination on the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR)**

We are required to register your flu vaccination in the AIR. This is entered against your Medicare number. You will be asked to provide your Medicare card number and Individual Reference number (no. next to your name on the card) as part of the online booking and Consent Form completion.

***\*Please have your Medicare card with you when completing these documents.***

*If you have any other questions, you can discuss these with your nurse on the day of vaccination or contact Work Health Professionals on (08) 9204 1999.*

*Any adverse reactions to the vaccine should be reported to the WA Vaccine Safety Surveillance (WAVSS). It is important that you contact Work Health Professionals on 9204 1999 if you have any significant adverse events in the few days after your vaccination so that this report can be filed.*