

# Flu Vaccine Information Sheet

This information sheet has been developed for healthcare providers to use with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people when discussing influenza vaccination. For further support on how to discuss vaccination with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families, see 'Talking about flu vaccination with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families'.

## What is influenza (flu)?

Influenza ('the flu') is a potentially serious infection of the nose, throat and lungs caused by influenza viruses. It spreads easily from person to person.

## What is the difference between flu and the common cold?

Both flu and the common cold cause infection of the nose and throat, but they are caused by different viruses. The flu can be much more serious than the common cold, as it can affect your lungs and you can end up in hospital.

## What are the risks of flu?

The flu can be a serious disease and can cause death. Our mob is at a high risk of getting very sick with the flu. Complications (such as difficulty breathing, needing to go to the hospital or even death) are most common among Elders, bubs and people with other health problems (for example, lung or heart problems, or diabetes).

## When should I get the flu vaccine?

You should get the flu vaccine anytime from April onwards to be protected for the peak flu season, which is generally from June to September. It's never too late to vaccinate, since the flu can circulate in the community all year.

## Why should I get the flu vaccine?

The flu vaccine helps you stay healthy and strong and can protect you and your mob from the flu. If you are pregnant, the flu vaccine will also protect your baby against the flu when it is born. Getting the flu vaccine lowers the chance that you'll need to go to the hospital if you get the flu.

**Vaccines for COVID-19 are also available.** The COVID-19 vaccines used in Australia are safe and protect you from getting very sick from the COVID-19 disease.

It's important you get your flu vaccine and COVID-19 vaccines to keep you and others in the community healthy.

## Can the flu vaccine be given at the same visit as the COVID-19 vaccine?

The flu vaccine and the COVID-19 vaccine can be safely given at the same visit. The best way to protect yourself against getting both infections is to make sure you've had your flu vaccine and are fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

## Where can I get vaccinated?

At your local doctor, Aboriginal Medical Service (AMS) or local pharmacy. If you go to your doctor or AMS, also ask them about other vaccines that you may need to stay healthy. The flu vaccine is free for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. If you get asked to pay for the flu vaccine, please remind the doctor, nurse or reception staff that you are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander.

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## Common myths about the flu vaccine

"I had it (flu vaccine) and within a week I was sick, so you gave it to me."



- It is normal to feel a bit achy, tired or feverish after getting your flu vaccine and to have redness and swelling at the spot where the needle went in. These side effects are normal; they mean that your body is responding well to the vaccine.
- These side effects should go away after a day or two. Serious side effects of flu vaccine are very rare.
- The flu vaccine does not have a live virus, so it cannot give you the flu.
- It takes time for your body to develop protection against the virus after vaccination. So, if you come into contact with the flu virus soon after you receive your flu vaccine, it is still possible for you to become sick with the flu. That is why it is important to vaccinate early, to protect yourself and your mob against the flu.

"I never had the flu, so why should I have it (flu vaccine) now?"



- Even if you are usually healthy, the flu can make you very unwell. Our mob is at a high risk of getting very sick with the flu.
- As well as protecting you from getting sick with the flu, the flu vaccine also helps protect the mob around you from the flu. If you don't catch the flu, you can't spread the flu!
- This community protection is especially important for Elders, bubs and people with other health problems (for example, lung or heart problems, or diabetes). By vaccinating yourself, you are protecting them!



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**For more information** about vaccination for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, see [www.ncirs.org.au/VFOM](http://www.ncirs.org.au/VFOM)

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