

## Vaccination

Vaccination is the best way to reduce the risk of getting flu. Being vaccinated gives you protection against flu by building immunity to the virus and preventing transmission of the virus to other people.

Vaccination is required annually, as immunity from the vaccine decreases over time and the vaccine can change each year to cover the current virus strains. Vaccination usually takes up to 2 weeks to be effective.

The flu season usually peaks in most of Queensland in July/August.

Vaccination is recommended for anyone aged 6 months and older who wishes to protect themselves from influenza and its complications.

Free vaccine is available for those individuals at greatest risk of severe flu. They are:

- pregnant women during any trimester
- adults aged over 65 years old
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years old and over
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children aged 6 months to 5 years old
- individuals over 6 months old with medical conditions predisposing them to severe flu.

## Where to get vaccinated:

- Your doctor or local immunisation provider
- Community pharmacies may offer a flu vaccination service

## References

Australian Govt. Dept. of Health and Aging, Infection Control Guidelines, March 2020

URL: <http://conditions.health.qld.gov.au/HealthCondition/condition/14/217/82/influenza-the-flu>



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## Influenza

(The Flu)

Patient Information



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## What is the FLU?

Influenza or 'the flu' is a highly contagious disease caused by infection from influenza type A or B (or rarely C) virus. These viruses infect the upper airways and lungs.

The flu can occur all year round but in temperate areas the influenza season typically occurs during the winter months.

Flu is not the same as a common cold, and can be a serious illness. For some people, such as the elderly and those with underlying medical conditions, the flu can cause serious complications which require hospitalisation. It can sometimes lead to death.

Flu is usually spread through infected people coughing and sneezing, which temporarily contaminates the surrounding air and surfaces with infected droplets. You can reduce the risk of infection by getting vaccinated and practicing good hand and respiratory hygiene. Occasionally there have been worldwide outbreaks of flu, known as flu pandemics, which have occurred with the global spread of a new type of flu virus

## Signs and symptoms

Symptoms usually appear 1 to 3 days after being infected. The symptoms of flu can include:

- Fever
- dry cough
- muscle and joint pain
- tiredness or extreme exhaustion
- headache
- sore throat.
- nasal congestion

In the elderly, fever may be absent and the only signs of flu may be:

- confusion
- shortness of breath
- worsening of a chronic condition

Children are more likely to have gastrointestinal symptoms (nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea).

## Treatment

Generally, flu is managed by:

- resting in bed
- drinking plenty of fluids (particularly water)
- taking over-the-counter medication to help relieve symptoms (take as directed in the product information).
- Prescription antiviral medications can reduce the length of time symptoms last and help you return to your daily routines earlier. These medications are most effective if they are started within 48 hours of flu symptoms appearing.

See your doctor if you:

- are concerned about your symptoms
- are in a high-risk group have a cough and high fever (38 degrees Celsius or more) that is not improving

## Transmission

The flu can spread from person to person by:

- droplets spread from an infected person's coughs or sneezes (these droplets generally travel less than 1 meter)
- touching surfaces contaminated by infected droplets (including hands, phones, keyboards and door handles) and then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes.

People with flu can be infectious to others from 24 hours before symptoms start until a week after the start of symptoms. Even people with mild flu illness can transmit the infection.

## Prevention

You can reduce the risk of infection by getting vaccinated and practicing good hand and respiratory hygiene to protect yourself and others:

- stay home when you are sick
- wash your hands regularly with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub
- wash your hands before touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- use a tissue, or the inside of your arm, when you cough and sneeze
- throw tissues away immediately and wash hands
- don't share items such as cigarettes, cups, lipstick, toys, or anything which has come into contact with the mouth or nose
- stay at least 1 metre away from people who have flu-like symptoms
- clean frequently touched surfaces regularly, such as door handles, taps, tables, benches, and fridge doors
- flu viruses can be removed using household detergent

