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## **STATEMENT**

### **Australian community urged to get vaccinated against influenza**

**With the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, this year's winter season will likely see both an increase in transmission of the coronavirus and, for the first time since 2019, a resurgence in influenza.**

Given this, it is important that people, particularly those in at-risk population groups, maximise their protection against both viruses by being vaccinated – and continue to practise all of the safe hygiene measures we have become accustomed to throughout the pandemic.

Both influenza and COVID-19 are highly contagious viral infections that can lead to serious illness, hospitalisation or even death.

Everyone 6 months and older is recommended to get a flu vaccine each year.

Flu vaccines registered for use in Australia are safe and effective and are the best way to protect yourself from influenza and transmitting it to others. If you have been vaccinated, you can still get the flu but it is generally a less severe illness.

Getting your flu vaccination ahead of the peak flu season will provide the highest level of protection. This usually occurs from June to September in most parts of Australia. It takes up to two weeks for the vaccine to be completely effective, so organising your vaccination before June is best.

It is important people are aware that COVID-19 vaccines do not provide protection against influenza. Equally, the flu vaccines do not provide protection against COVID-19.

For this reason, it is vital people get a flu vaccine and are also up to date with their COVID-19 vaccinations – including having a COVID-19 winter booster dose if they are eligible.

If you have been sick with COVID-19, you can receive a flu vaccine as soon as you feel well.

The medical advice from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation is flu vaccines can be safely administered at the same time as a COVID-19 vaccine.

We would encourage any eligible person who hasn't received their COVID-19 winter booster dose to check with their health service provider to see if they can receive both vaccines during the same appointment.

There are enough flu vaccine doses in Australia to cover all at-risk people who are eligible for a free vaccine through the National Immunisation Program.

People at more risk from influenza and who are eligible for a free flu vaccine include:

- adults 65 years and over
- children aged 6 months to less than 5 years
- pregnant women
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 6 months and over
- people aged 6 months and over with certain medical conditions that increase their chance of severe influenza and its complications.

There are also sufficient flu vaccine doses in the private market now to meet demand for people not eligible to receive the free vaccine but who wish to protect themselves from influenza.

This year we are particularly concerned about young children, as many have never been exposed to the flu virus or had a flu vaccine, and have not developed any immunity, increasing the risk of complications. Influenza can be serious for all children, even healthy children.

Flu vaccination during pregnancy is safe, free and recommended during every pregnancy and at any stage of pregnancy.

Babies under 6 months are too young to get the flu vaccine themselves. By getting vaccinated during pregnancy, protective antibodies are passed on to the baby, protecting them in their first few months of life when they are most vulnerable.

In addition to vaccination, people should continue to practise all the prevention measures we have become used to, including covering coughs and sneezes, regular hand washing and staying home when unwell.

Further information about influenza vaccination this year is available from the Department of Health at: [Help stop the flu in 2022 | Australian Government Department of Health](#)

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