

## Flu Vaccination

### What is influenza?

Influenza is an illness caused by infection with a strain of the influenza virus. Influenza is more severe and lasts longer than the common cold and is caused by a different virus.

### What are the characteristics of influenza?

- sudden onset
- high fevers for up to 3 days
- headaches
- red, painful eyes
- widespread muscle aches and pains
- severe cough

### Why is influenza a problem?

20% of Australians experience influenza each year. Adults over 65 or those with certain health conditions (asthma, diabetes, heart problems etc) can develop complications or even die. Most workers who develop influenza need to have one to two weeks off before they are well enough to return to work.

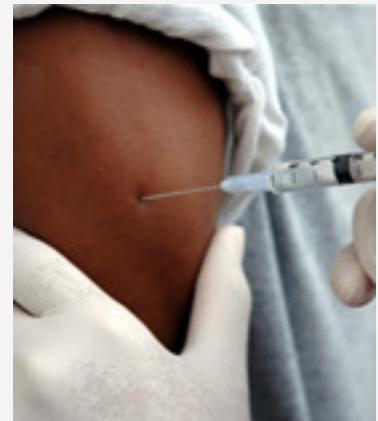
### What is in the flu vaccine?

The flu vaccine contains inactivated virus fragments from the types of influenza that have been prevalent in the Northern Hemisphere during their winter. These are most likely to be common in Australian during the winter period.

The flu vaccine also contains trace amounts of egg proteins (the vaccine is cultured in eggs) and certain antibiotics (neomycin and polymyxin).

### Who should have a flu vaccination?

The Australian Government's Department of Health and Ageing recommends the flu vaccination for anyone aged over 6 months who wishes to be protected against influenza. It is especially recommended for those who have significant underlying medical conditions such as heart disease, chronic lung conditions or diabetes as these can be made worse by influenza. In addition, the vaccine is recommended for all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, those aged 65 years and over and pregnant women. The government will supply free vaccines to people in these categories (although you will still have to pay for the consultation if you see your GP).



### Who shouldn't have the vaccine?

You should not have the vaccine if you:

- have an egg allergy (i.e. develop swelling, rash or breathing difficulties after eating eggs)
- have an allergy to the antibiotics polymyxin or neomycin
- have a high fever (> 38.5C). You can postpone the vaccination until you are well. It is okay to have the vaccine if the fever is only mild.

### Is it effective?

Whilst no vaccination is 100% effective, having a flu vaccination may be effective in preventing up to 70 to 90% of cases of flu. The flu vaccination protects you from the particular strains circulating that year - these are identified by medical experts and can vary from year to year. That is why it is important to have a flu vaccination each year. It is important to note that the vaccination will not protect you from the common cold viruses that may be circulating each winter.

### Can I get the flu from the vaccination?

Many individuals become concerned that they may get the flu from the vaccine itself. The vaccine does not contain live viruses so you cannot get the flu from the vaccine. Some people develop a slight fever and aches for a day or 2 afterwards but this is part of the body's immune response to the vaccination. It is not the flu. You can still catch a cold - the vaccine does not protect from the common cold and other viruses that are not included in the vaccine.

### What should I do after my flu vaccination?

- You should take the band aid off the injection site by the evening after your vaccination.
- Check the vaccination area.
- It is normal to have some redness and/or a raised spot.
- If you have any concerns, please contact your GP or Ford Health.

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

Colds	Flu
Mainly affects head and throat	May get symptoms throughout the body
No fever (except toddlers and infants who may show a fever of between 37.5 and 39°C)	An abrupt fever in the 38.5 to 42°C range.
Nasal stuffiness, sneezing and runny nose, sometimes a throat irritation.	Sudden fever followed by flushed face, body aches, headache, lack of energy, and sometimes dizziness and vomiting.
Symptoms begin 1 to 5 days after catching a cold, usually with irritation in the nose or a scratchy feeling in the throat, followed within hours by sneezing and a watery nasal discharge.	Symptoms begin within 1 and 3 days - Usually fever, tiredness, and muscle aches followed by an increase in respiratory symptoms which can include croup, sore throat, bronchiolitis, ear infection and/or pneumonia.
Usually over in 7 days, although a cough may linger.	Symptoms (except a cough) usually disappear within 4 to 7 days. Sometimes the fever returns. The cough and tiredness may last for some weeks.
Very common infectious disease caused by more than 200 different types of viruses.	Seasonal flu is preventable with the flu vaccine!

