

## Q&A

### Can't I build up a natural immunity to influenza?

Immunity develops after you have been exposed to a particular strain of the influenza virus either through infection or immunisation. Influenza immunisation prepares and boosts your immune system to help you fight the influenza viruses circulating each year. Immunity against one strain of influenza virus will not necessarily protect you against another.

### Can the vaccine give me influenza?

No. You cannot get influenza from the vaccine, as it does not contain any live viruses. However, some people will experience mild side effects such as muscle aches or headaches for a short time after immunisation. This is a normal reaction.

### Why is it so important that pregnant women get immunised?

Pregnant women are more likely to get severe influenza illness than other people, and it can affect their unborn baby. The influenza vaccine has been proven to have an excellent safety record for both pregnant women and their unborn baby.

The protection from immunisation in pregnancy is also passed on to the unborn baby so they are born with some protection against influenza for the first few months of life. This protection comes naturally from antibodies that you have created as a result of immunisation. The vaccine itself does not directly immunise the baby.

Ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist about **influenza immunisation today**

## The National Immunisation Register

The Ministry of Health keeps a record of influenza immunisation on the National Immunisation Register so that authorised health professionals can find out what immunisations have been given. It helps them to monitor the population's protection against influenza.

For more information about the National Immunisation Register, or if you do not want your information recorded please talk your doctor or health professional.

## What is The Immunisation Advisory Centre (IMAC)?

IMAC is a nationwide organisation based at the University of Auckland. It provides New Zealanders with a local source of independent, factual information about vaccine-preventable diseases and the benefits and possible risks of immunisation. IMAC manages the promotion of the National Influenza Campaign on behalf of the Ministry of Health.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:  
**FIGHTFLU.CO.NZ**  
**0800 466 863**



The influenza vaccine is also available from vaccinating pharmacies. Go to [fightflu.co.nz](http://fightflu.co.nz) to find out more.

The influenza vaccine is a prescription medicine. Talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist about the benefits and possible risks. TAPS NA9775. IMAC1804.

**Influenza.**  
Don't get it.  
Don't give it.

**CAN BE**  
**ANYWHERE**

Get immunised

## Influenza can be a serious illness

Influenza, commonly called the flu, can be a serious illness that is sometimes fatal. Infection with the influenza virus may lead to a stay in hospital for any age group but particularly if you are elderly or have an ongoing medical condition. Influenza can make an existing medical condition, such as asthma or diabetes, a lot worse.

Even if you do not end up in hospital, influenza can keep you in bed for a week or more, preventing you from doing work, sport or just about anything that requires leaving the house.

## The influenza virus is different from a cold virus

A cold virus only affects the nose, throat and the upper chest and lasts for a few days, whereas influenza can be a serious illness that affects the whole body and can last up to a week or more.

| Influenza   | A cold                            |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| Sudden onset of illness. Moderate to severe illness | Mild illness                      |
| Fever (usually high)                                | Mild fever                        |
| Headache (may be severe)                            | Mild headache (congested sinuses) |
| Dry cough, may become moist                         | Sometimes a cough                 |
| Muscle aches  | Muscle aches are uncommon         |
| Shivering   | A runny nose                      |
| Bed rest necessary                                  |                                   |
| Can suffer severe complications (eg pneumonia)      |                                   |

## You could come in contact with influenza at anytime

Around one in four New Zealanders are infected with influenza each year. Many people won't feel sick at all, but can still pass it on to others.

Influenza can be anywhere. Contact with the influenza virus is almost unavoidable, and while contact does not necessarily mean infection, it does mean that you are never far from the possibility of catching influenza.

## Protecting yourself, your family & your community

By immunising against influenza you can protect yourself and lessen the chance of bringing it home to a baby, older relative, or someone with a medical condition who could develop serious complications from influenza. Get immunised early before winter.

## Being fit and healthy will not stop you getting influenza

Almost everyone\* can benefit from an annual influenza immunisation.

The vaccine is especially important for people at risk of serious complications from influenza including:

- ▶ **pregnant women (any trimester)**
- ▶ **people with an ongoing medical condition like asthma, diabetes, or a heart or lung condition**
- ▶ **people aged 65 years or over**

## Influenza immunisation is FREE for people who are most at risk

\*Individuals who have had a severe allergic reaction to an influenza vaccine should consult their doctor, nurse or pharmacist before being immunised.

**Influenza.**  
Don't get it.  
Don't give it.

# INFLUENZA FACTS

- ▶ **Influenza isn't just a bad cold – it can be serious and can kill**
- ▶ **Around 1.2 million kiwis get influenza immunisation yearly**
- ▶ **Immunisation prepares your immune system to fight influenza**
- ▶ **You cannot get influenza from the vaccine**
- ▶ **Influenza immunisation is FREE for those most at risk**

**To find out if you qualify for FREE immunisation, speak to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist today.**