

the 2015 influenza guide for general practitioners



Influenza Specialist Group

Influenza is a potentially fatal disease that is estimated to cause **MORE DEATHS** than accidents on roads:

1500-3500
INFLUENZA DEATHS
ANNUALLY

18,000 Influenza in Australia results in more than 18,000 HOSPITALISATIONS each year.

67,746

In 2014 67,746 Australians suffered from laboratory confirmed influenza. It is estimated that lab confirmed influenza only represents the tip of the iceberg in the community.²

ICU:10%

The overall rate of influenza cases ADMITTED DIRECTLY TO ICU in 2014 was 10%.¹

75%

75% of hospitalisations had known medical co-morbidities.¹



13,959 CASES UNDER 10 YEARS

LABORATORY CONFIRMED CASES



2,497 CASES OVER 85 YEARS



18,481 CASES 30-49 YEARS



Risks of influenza



Benefits of vaccination

PREVENT INFECTION

PROTECT AGAINST NCDs*

PROTECT AGAINST COMPLICATIONS FROM EXISTING NCDs*



* non-communicable diseases, e.g. heart attack, stroke

It's in your hands.

Doctors are **KEY INFLUENCERS** in people getting their influenza vaccination.

YOU CAN HELP TO PROTECT the many thousands of Australians who are at risk of influenza complications and did not get a flu shot. Advise them of the benefits of a flu shot!

Some simple steps that can help facilitate influenza vaccination programs in general practice:

- **FLAG RECORDS** of patients at increased risk of influenza complications.
- **REMIND PATIENTS** of the benefits of vaccination.
- **ORGANISE VACCINATION CLINICS.**

The influenza vaccine strains for the 2015 season have changed since last season. (WHO)

Who should be vaccinated?

The ISG recommends annual influenza vaccination for optimal protection.

Annual influenza vaccination is recommended for any person (6 months+) who wishes to reduce the risk of becoming ill with influenza. People at an increased risk of influenza complications include:

- **Older adults** (65+)
- **Indigenous Australians** (15+)
- **Pregnant women**
- **Residents of nursing homes** or other long-term facilities
- Those with **underlying medical conditions** (such as heart conditions, asthma, diabetes, chronic neurological disease, renal and metabolic disease, and impaired immunity).

This group may qualify for free vaccine under the Immunise Australia's National Immunisation Program.

Influenza and pregnancy

"**VACCINATING PREGNANT WOMEN** against influenza gives a 3 for 1 benefit:

- protects the woman during pregnancy and in the early months of motherhood
- protects the young infant by trans-placental antibodies
- protects the young infant by antibodies in breast milk."

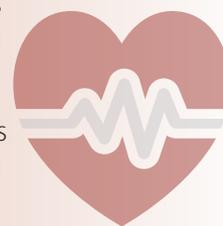
ELIZABETH McCARTHY
Senior Lecturer, Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, University of Melbourne, Perinatal Centre, Mercy Hospital for Women



Influenza and heart attacks

"New research suggests that the flu shot seems to almost **HALVE THE RISK OF HEART ATTACKS** in middle-aged people with narrowed arteries. The study adds to evidence that influenza vaccine could be protective against heart attacks and cardiovascular disease, which is the leading cause of death globally and in Australia."

PROFESSOR RAINA MACINTYRE
Head of the School of Public Health and Community Medicine, Faculty of Medicine at the University of New South Wales and Professor of Infectious Diseases Epidemiology



Other conditions

OTHER CONDITIONS that might put people at a high risk of influenza complications include:

- **OBESITY**
- **STROKE**
- **TOBACCO SMOKING**
- **DOWN SYNDROME**

REFERENCES:

- 1 Australian Government Department of Health, Australian Influenza Surveillance Report, No 8, 2014
- 2 National Notifiable Diseases Surveillance System at 08/01/15



Influenza and children

It is especially important that **CHILDREN AT PARTICULAR RISK** of severe complications from influenza are vaccinated. The Australia Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) has made a number of recommendations with regard to childhood influenza vaccinations, which are summarized below.

BioCSL Fluvax® is **not approved** by the TGA for use in children **less than 5 years of age** and **must not** be given to this age group. The ATAGI also does not recommend the use of this vaccine in children aged less than 10 years.

However there are four vaccines approved by the TGA for children **6 months and older**:

- Agrippal® (Novartis)
- Fluarix® (GlaxoSmithKline)
- Influvac® (Abbott)
- Vaxigrip® (Sanofi).

Please refer to <http://www.immunise.health.gov.au/internet/immunise/Publishing.nsf/content/ATAGI-advice-TIV> for more details

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The Influenza Specialist Group (ISG) is a not for profit organization, consisting of medical and scientific specialists from around Australia and New Zealand, with an expertise in influenza.

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