



Dear Immunisation Provider

Seasonal Influenza Vaccinations 2019

- Government funded influenza vaccine deliveries will commence from mid April
- From 2019 all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 6 months and over are eligible for Government funded influenza vaccine
- The ACT Government funds influenza vaccine for all children aged 6 months to under 5 years
- Children under 9 years who receive influenza vaccine for the first time require two doses four weeks apart
- One government funded trivalent influenza vaccine for people aged 65 and over is available in 2019 (Fluad®)
- Pregnant women can have influenza vaccine at any stage of pregnancy
- All influenza vaccines are latex free in 2019

Government funded influenza vaccine will be delivered to your practice in mid-late April. The vaccine can be used from the time it is delivered to your practice until its expiry date.

Influenza vaccines are funded under the National Immunisation Program (NIP) in 2019 for the following groups due to their increased risk of complications from influenza:

- All Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander persons aged ≥ 6 months, including those age 5 to 14 years (note expanded age range);
- All adults aged ≥ 65 years;
- All people aged ≥ 6 months who have certain medical conditions which increase the risk of influenza disease complications such as obesity, cardiac disease, chronic respiratory conditions, diabetes, metabolic disorders, renal disease, chronic liver disease, chronic neurological conditions, haematological disorders, immunocompromising conditions, and children aged 6 months to 10 years on long term aspirin therapy (see Australian Immunisation Handbook for details) and
- Pregnant women (during any stage of pregnancy).

The ACT Government funds influenza vaccines for all children aged 6 months to under 5 years.

This year ACT Health will be providing NIP funded influenza vaccine for people aged 65 and over to a number of ACT pharmacies as part of a pilot program. Adjuvanted trivalent influenza vaccine (Fluad®) will be provided to participating pharmacies for administration to people aged 65 and over from late April to August this year.

Vaccines being supplied for government funded programs in 2019

Vaccine	Quadrivalent				Trivalent (for age ≥65 only)
	FluQuadri Junior ¹ 0.25 mL (Sanofi)	Fluarix Tetra ¹ 0.50 mL (GSK)	FluQuadri 0.50 mL (Sanofi)	Afluria Quad 0.50 mL (Seqirus)	Fluad 0.50 mL (Seqirus)
Age group					
<6 months	x	x	x	x	x
6 to 35 months (<3 years)	✓	✓	x	x	x
≥3 to <5 years	x	✓	✓	x	x
≥5 to 17 years	x	✓	✓	✓	x
≥18 years	x	✓	✓	✓	x
≥65 years	x	✓ ²	✓ ²	✓ ²	✓

1. Note FluQuadri Junior and Fluarix Tetra have different doses.

2. The quadrivalent (QIV) vaccines are still available for people 65 years and over through the NIP, however, vaccine experts recommend the adjuvanted trivalent vaccine (Fluad) over the QIVs for this age group.

IMPORTANT - PLEASE NOTE: Fluad is NOT registered for use in people aged <65 years.

Recommended doses of influenza vaccine by age

Age	Dose volume	Number of doses required in the first year of receiving influenza vaccine	Number of doses required if previously received any doses of influenza vaccine
6 months to <3 years	FluQuadri Junior: <u>0.25 mL</u> Fluarix Tetra: <u>0.50 mL</u>	2	1
≥3 years to <9 years	0.50 mL	2	1
≥9 years	0.50 mL	1*	1

*For persons with certain specific immunocompromising conditions, haematopoietic stem cell or solid organ transplant, please refer to the Australian Immunisation Handbook for further information on number of doses required.

Children aged 6 months to <9 years receiving influenza vaccine for the first time require 2 doses, at least 4 weeks apart, to maximise the immune response to the vaccine strains. For children who have received one or more doses of an influenza vaccine in a previous year, only one dose of quadrivalent influenza vaccine is required in the current season and all seasons thereafter.

CAUTION: Age restrictions apply to all vaccines

All influenza vaccines are approved for use in specific age cohorts, based on research and evidence about their clinical safety and effectiveness. With multiple vaccines in use, mistakes are easily made. Please note changes:

- Fluarix Tetra is now approved for children aged 6 months to < 3years, and has the same dose for all approved age groups.
- Afluria Quad is now approved for children from 5 years of age.

Before you administer a flu vaccine:

- **check your patient's age***
- **check that you have the correct vaccine**

**The packaging and syringe have the appropriate age groups written on them*

Recommendations to reduce the risk of off-label use in your practice:

- Organise your vaccine fridge so that vaccines are quarantined and clearly labelled – for example, set up separate spaces in the fridge with signs indicating the appropriate age indications, e.g. 'Under 3 years only' '65 years and over only';
- Make sure two clinical staff check vaccines before they are administered;
- Refresh your knowledge of influenza vaccination on the Immunise Australia website (<https://beta.health.gov.au/health-topics/immunisation/health-professionals>); and
- Have discussions in your practice about what practical steps and protocols you could put into place to make sure patients receive the correct vaccine every time.

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation recommends the influenza vaccine for everyone from 6 months of age, as anyone can get seriously ill from the influenza.

For those not eligible for funded vaccine, it can be obtained by prescription through GPs and some community pharmacies for adults.

All vaccines administered to persons of any age should be recorded on the Australian Immunisation Register (AIR).

For further information on the 2019 influenza vaccination program and influenza vaccine visit the Immunise Australia Program website <https://beta.health.gov.au/health-topics/immunisation/health-professionals> or contact the Health Protection Service Immunisation Information line on 5124 9800.

Adverse events following immunisation (AEFI) are notifiable under the *Public Health Act 1997*. If your patient experiences an AEFI, please complete an AEFI reporting form available from: <https://www.health.act.gov.au/services/immunisation>

Thank you for your assistance in protecting our community from influenza this year.

Yours sincerely



Dr Kerry Coleman
A/g Chief Health Officer
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