



PROTECT YOURSELF AND YOUR FAMILY THIS WINTER – GET YOUR FREE FLU VACCINE

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Pacific people across New Zealand are at a higher risk of getting sick with Influenza, 'the flu', especially our elders, young children, babies and pregnant women.

One of the important ways to protect yourself and your family is by having a flu vaccination every year. The flu vaccine is especially important for Pacific people this year because the borders have been closed for two years.

We have had very little influenza circulating in our communities since the COVID-19 pandemic began. This means our community immunity is lower than usual, so it's really important to get the flu vaccine.

Many of the ways we used to fight the COVID-19 pandemic also apply to the flu – wear a mask get vaccinated, stay home if you are unwell, wash your hands regularly, and cover your mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing.

FAQ

What are the flu symptoms?

The flu can include any or all of the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Lack of energy,- may be severe and last for two or more weeks
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Vomiting and diarrhoea – more common in children than in adults.

The flu is not just a 'bad cold'. Although some of the symptoms are the same, the flu is usually much more severe, often has a sudden onset and can have much more serious consequences including hospitalisation.



Why should I get the flu vaccine?

There's a much higher chance of catching the flu because we have come out of lockdowns and more people are mixing and mingling. And, with international borders open, we'll see the flu spreading in our communities.

Getting the flu vaccine is a way of protecting yourself and those people around you that might become more sick from the flu, just like we've seen with COVID-19.

The flu can give you pneumonia. And in severe cases, you could be admitted to hospital – particularly if you're older, a young child, pregnant, or have an ongoing medical condition, such as heart disease or diabetes.

Around 500 people die from the flu every year, with hundreds more hospitalised.

Most people can receive the influenza vaccine, however if you are unwell, you should wait until you're well again to get your flu vaccine.

Can you get multiple vaccines at the same time?

Yes you can. You can have a COVID-19 vaccine or booster at the same time as your free flu vaccine. There's no need to leave a gap between these vaccines.

Children can also get their immunisations such as measles, mumps and rubella vaccine, at the same time as the flu vaccine.

It is strongly recommended if you haven't already had all your COVID-19 vaccines or your booster to please have this at the same time as getting your flu vaccine.

How much does the flu vaccine cost?

The flu vaccine is **free** for Pacific people who are:

- Over 55 years old.
- Pregnant
- have long term health conditions like; diabetes, cancers, cardiovascular diseases, respiratory diseases, mental illness, chronic pain, chronic kidney disease and dementia.
- Children under 5 years old who have been to hospital for lung, respiratory problems or have long term health conditions such as asthma.

To get a free vaccine you need to be a New Zealand resident.



What if I'm not eligible for a free flu vaccine?

- Talk to your doctor or a nurse to see what your options are. In some cases, you whole family may be eligible to receive a free flu vaccine.
- You can still get one, but it will cost between \$25 – \$45 depending on the vaccine and provider.

If you've previously had a free flu vaccine you're probably still going to be eligible for one.

If you haven't had one before, but you have a long-term health condition please contact your GP or Healthline free on 0800 611 116 to find out if you're eligible for a free flu vaccine.

What are the common side effects of the Flu vaccine?

There are common side effects that come with getting the flu vaccine and they're similar to those that we get when having the COVID-19 vaccine.

The most common reactions are:

- A sore arm, or pain, itching or redness at the injection site (1 in 3 adults)
- Aches and pains (1 in 10 adults)

Some people don't experience any side effects after a flu vaccine.

You may be asked to wait 15 to 20 minutes after your vaccination so that treatment can be given quickly if a very rare, severe allergic reaction occurs.

Additionally, people who have had previous allergic reactions to vaccines should talk to their GP first before getting a flu vaccine.

What is in the flu vaccine?

It is important to note that the vaccine cannot give you the flu, it is **not** a live virus.

There are **no** preservatives, thiomersal or mercury. There are tiny amounts of egg protein, but it is still safe for people with egg allergies. If you are worried about this, talk to your doctor or a nurse.





How effective is the flu vaccine?

New Zealand's 2022 flu vaccine will protect against four strains of flu virus – two influenza type A strains and two influenza type B strains. Each year the vaccine is made to match the different strains of flu virus likely to be in NZ.

It will take up to 2 weeks after getting your vaccine to start protecting you.

It is also important to remember that unlike the COVID-19 vaccine, the flu vaccine is not new.

Because of this, there is lots of data and information available to make sure what's in the vaccine is effective. People have been receiving the flu vaccine for decades from children as young as six months old all the way up to adults over a hundred years old.

Does the COVID-19 vaccine protect me from the flu?

No it doesn't. The COVID-19 vaccine will protect you from COVID-19 only. No other vaccine will protect you from the flu, only the flu vaccine will do this.

Should I be worried about new flu strains?

With international borders opening, we'll see new strains of flu spreading in our communities.

The 2022 southern hemisphere flu vaccine contains strains that were circulating during the northern hemisphere's flu season. So this places us at an advantage now that the borders have reopened to international travellers.



Workplace

The flu is very infectious and is easily spread to other people, particularly in close contact situations such as workplaces.

So, if you work with children or if you work with elderly, please get a flu vaccine.

Check with your workplace to see if they offer a free flu vaccine.

Employers can choose to pay for their staff to receive a flu vaccine if they wish. A workplace vaccinator can come to your workplace to administer flu vaccines.

Where to get a free flu vaccine

- Your GP
- Pharmacies
- Call Healthline free on 0800 611 116

You can also go to winterwellness.nz or healthpoint.co.nz to book an appointment.

Do I need ID?

No. Your vaccinator can confirm your age by asking for your full name and matching you against your National Health Index (NHI) number.

Pregnancy

There's no increased risk of side effects from the flu vaccine if you're pregnant or for your unborn baby. If you have any concerns, speak to your GP.

