



Australian Government
Department of Health and Ageing

SEASONAL INFLUENZA VACCINE: 2011

I am writing to update you on the arrangements for seasonal influenza vaccination under the National Immunisation Program (NIP) for 2011.

Vaccination for seasonal influenza has been shown to be an effective way of preventing influenza and other related illnesses. It is especially important that those who are considered to be at a higher risk of getting the flu such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who are aged 15 years and over, pregnant or anyone over six months with a chronic illness receive the free seasonal influenza vaccine under the NIP. The seasonal influenza vaccine is safe and effective. I urge you to promote the importance of seasonal influenza vaccine to those eligible.

The 2011 seasonal influenza vaccines will contain the same trivalent influenza strains as used in 2010 but people who received the seasonal influenza vaccine any time in 2010 still need to be vaccinated in 2011 to ensure high levels of immunity. To promote the availability of the vaccine, the Department of Health and Ageing has developed fact sheets, brochures and posters. These are enclosed for your information and dissemination.

For further information, or to view or order any of the communication materials, you can contact the Immunise Australia Information Line on 1800 671 811 or the Immunise Australia Program website:

www.immunise.health.gov.au/internet/immunise/publishing.nsf/Content/resources-menu

If you wish to discuss this further please contact the Immunise Australia Information Hotline 1800 671 811 or email judy.cook@health.gov.au

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Julianne Quaine'.

Julianne Quaine
Assistant Secretary
Immunisation Branch

5 April 2011



FACT SHEET FOR IMMUNISATION PROVIDERS

INFLUENZA VACCINATION 2011

The 2011 Seasonal
Influenza Vaccination
Program commences
on 15th March.

PEOPLE ELIGIBLE FOR FREE INFLUENZA VACCINE

Under the National Immunisation Program (NIP) the following people are eligible to receive free influenza vaccine:

- > all individuals aged 65 years and over;
- > all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples aged 15 years and over;
- > pregnant women; and
- > individuals aged 6 months and over with medical conditions predisposing to severe influenza, namely:
 - > *Cardiac disease*, including cyanotic congenital heart disease, coronary artery disease and congestive heart failure.
 - > *Chronic respiratory conditions*, including suppurative lung disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and severe asthma.
 - > *Other chronic illnesses requiring regular medical follow up or hospitalisation in the previous year*, including diabetes mellitus, chronic metabolic diseases, chronic renal failure, and haemoglobinopathies.
 - > *Chronic neurological conditions that impact on respiratory function*, including multiple sclerosis, spinal cord injuries, and seizure disorders.
 - > *Impaired immunity*, including HIV, malignancy and chronic steroid use.
 - > *Children aged 6 months to 10 years on long term aspirin therapy.*

VACCINE COMPOSITION

Influenza vaccination provides protection for about one year. Although the composition of the 2011 seasonal influenza vaccine is the same as the 2010 vaccine, people who had the seasonal influenza vaccine anytime

in 2010 still need be vaccinated in 2011 to ensure high levels of immunity. For the vaccine composition go to www.tga.gov.au/committee/aivc.htm

RECEIVING VACCINE SUPPLIES

Distribution of vaccine supplies will occur across the country from 1st March allowing for preparation of commencement of the program on 15th March. In the Northern Territory distribution of the vaccine may occur earlier.

INFLUENZA VACCINATION FOR CHILDREN

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) has recommended the use of *Influvac*[®] and *Vaxigrip*[®] in children between 6 months to less than 10 years of age under the NIP. *Fluvax*[®] is not registered for use in children less than 5 years in 2011 and should not be given in this age group.

Fluvax[®] may be used in children aged 5 years to less than 10 years of age when no alternative vaccine is readily available. If *Fluvax*[®] is administered, parents should be informed of the potential increased risk of fever but that febrile convulsions are rare in this age group. The full ATAGI statement including the rationale for these recommendations is available at www.immunise.health.gov.au

REPORT INFLUENZA VACCINATIONS AND ADVERSE EVENTS

Immunisation providers are encouraged to report all influenza vaccines given to children up to 7 years of age to the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register and any adverse events following immunisation at any age to the Therapeutic Goods Administration through the usual reporting mechanisms in their State or Territory.