

What you need to know about the flu vaccination



Don't want to take this fact sheet with you? Take a photo instead! It's important to keep this information handy.

Your best defence against the flu is to get a yearly flu vaccine. Although having the flu vaccine doesn't guarantee you won't catch the flu, it will give you more protection and mean you are less likely to experience complications from a flu infection.

Protection against the flu reduces over time. Each year the flu is caused by different strains, which may not be included in the previous year's vaccine. This is why it is important to have the flu vaccine every year.

Who can have the flu vaccine?

Flu vaccines are available for anyone aged 6+ months. The new flu vaccine is available in autumn each year and is free for those most likely to have complications from a flu infection. The flu vaccine is strongly recommended by health care professionals for those who have medical conditions as well as those who are pregnant.

If your child is under 9 years old and receiving the flu vaccine for the first time, they will need two vaccinations at least 4 weeks apart. Your vaccinator will let you know when the second dose is due.

Consent and recording your vaccination event

Before having your vaccine, the vaccinator will ask if you give consent. You have the right to make an informed choice about your healthcare including immunisations.

As part of the consent process, the vaccinator will explain how the vaccine works and why it is recommended as well as the potential risks.

They will explain what to expect after your vaccine and how and where to seek help if needed. You will receive this information verbally and should take this fact sheet home (or a photo of it). You will have time to have your questions answered and you can request an interpreter if you need one.

The vaccination event will be recorded by Health New Zealand on the Aotearoa Immunisation Register (AIR) and can be accessed by authorised health care staff e.g your GP.

For more information about your privacy when recording vaccinations, visit [tewhatauora.govt.nz/airprivacy](https://www.tewhatauora.govt.nz/airprivacy) or ask your vaccinator for a copy of the policy.

Are you pregnant?

If you catch the flu when you are pregnant, you could develop serious complications that can affect you and your pēpi (baby). Complications include:

- premature birth
- low birthweight
- miscarriage or stillbirth.

You can get a free flu vaccine at any stage of your pregnancy. If you are pregnant across two flu seasons, it is recommended that you get a vaccination in both seasons.

Whooping cough (pertussis) protection.

A whooping cough epidemic was declared throughout Aotearoa in November 2024. All pregnant people are encouraged to have their free whooping cough booster from 16 weeks of pregnancy in **every** pregnancy to protect **each** baby.

The protective antibodies made by the mother from having the flu and pertussis vaccines will pass through the placenta to pēpi. This will provide them with good protection against serious illness before they can start their infant vaccines at 6 weeks of age. The flu and pertussis vaccine are safe to receive during pregnancy and is highly recommended by healthcare professionals to protect pēpi.

Please let the vaccinator know if you/ the person being vaccinated:

- is currently unwell with a high fever
- is taking blood thinning medication or have a bleeding disorder
- have had a severe allergic reaction (anaphylaxis) to any vaccine, medicine, or anything else
- have had any other vaccines in the last week.

After the flu vaccination

It takes up to 2 weeks after having your vaccine for your body to start protecting against flu.

As with any vaccine, you may experience some side effects. Most are mild, do not last long and happen in the first few days of having the vaccine. The flu vaccine is not a live vaccine and cannot give you the flu. Some people notice side effects after their vaccine as part of their immune system working and this can sometimes be confused with a flu infection. Serious side effects after vaccination are very rare.

What you may feel	What can help
Swelling and pain or redness at the injection site (hard or sore to touch) Heavy arm	Place a cold wet cloth or ice pack where the injection was given (leave it on for a short time) Do not rub the injection site
Tiredness Muscle aches Headache Chills and/or fever	Rest and drink plenty of fluids Take paracetamol or ibuprofen for pain, if needed.

Allergic reactions and wait times after your immunisation

You will be asked to stay after the vaccination to make sure you are feeling okay, usually between 5 to 20 minutes. If you have had previous allergies or reactions to a vaccine, food, or something else, you may be asked to stay longer. Your vaccinator will let you know how long you will need to wait.

Reporting side effects

If you experience any side effects, you can report them to the Centre for Adverse Reactions Monitoring (CARM). Use the online form on the CARM website otago.ac.nz/carm



Are you a smoker or do you vape?

Smokers can be more at risk of complications following flu infection. If you would like free support on quitting or reducing the amount you smoke or vape visit quit.org.nz or call **0800 778 778**. Your vaccinator may also be able to support you with resources.

Are you and your whānau up to date with all immunisations?

Ask your vaccinator if you are due for any other immunisations and if these can be given at the same time as your flu vaccine.

It is usually fine to have other vaccines such as **whooping cough, measles, shingles, or COVID-19** vaccines with the flu immunisation.

Visit info.health.nz/immunisations for more information on what vaccines you and your whānau may be due for.



If you have any concerns about your symptoms after your vaccine, talk to your doctor or practice nurse, or call **healthline on 0800 611 116** anytime to get advice.

If you have immediate concerns about your safety, call **111** and make sure you tell them you have had a flu vaccination.

Children under 9 years who need a second dose

Your child's next flu vaccine is due:

___/___/____
DD MM YYYY

Other vaccines you can book now:

Ask your vaccinator how to book your next appointment or visit info.health.nz/bookavaccine