

20 April 2023

Community urged to vaccinate as flu season begins in NSW

NSW Health is urging the community to book in for their influenza vaccine as the state's flu season has now begun, with the latest data indicating influenza notifications have continued to increase.

More than 1,200 people in NSW were diagnosed with influenza during the past week, 9 April to 15 April, a 13 per cent increase compared with the previous week.

At the same time, there was also an increase in the number of people who presented to NSW emergency departments with influenza-like illness and required admission to hospital – the greatest increase has been in children.

NSW Chief Health Officer Dr Kerry Chant said now is the time to book in for your influenza vaccine.

“Everyone six months and older is recommended to get a flu vaccine and these are available through GPs for any age group, as well as through pharmacies for everyone aged five years and over,” Dr Chant said.

“In particular, we want to remind priority groups that the flu vaccine is free and readily available – so please, book in today to give yourself the best possible protection from severe illness that can be brought on by influenza.”

Priority groups include:

- Children aged 6 months to under five years
- People aged 65 and over
- Aboriginal people from 6 months of age
- Pregnant women
- Those with serious health conditions such as diabetes, cancer, immune disorders, obesity, severe asthma, kidney, heart, lung or liver disease.

Flu and COVID-19 vaccines can be given at the same time.

All adults can get a 2023 COVID-19 vaccine booster if it's been six months or longer since their last COVID-19 booster or confirmed infection (whichever is most recent) for additional protection against severe illness from COVID-19. More advice on COVID-19 booster vaccines can be found [here](#).

We can all take steps to help protect ourselves and our loved ones from COVID-19 and flu, including:

- Stay up to date with your recommended flu and COVID-19 vaccinations
- Stay home if you have cold or flu symptoms
- Wear a mask in crowded, indoor places
- Get together outdoors or in large, well-ventilated spaces with open doors and windows
- Wash or sanitise your hands often
- Talk with your doctor now if you are at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 or influenza to make a plan about what to do if you get sick, including what test to take, and discussing if you are eligible for antiviral medicines
- Don't visit people who are at higher risk of severe illness if you have cold or flu symptoms or have tested positive to COVID-19 or influenza.
- Take a rapid antigen test to test for COVID-19 especially before visiting vulnerable loved ones.

More information on Influenza can be found [here](#).