

The Influenza Specialist Group (ISG) is a prime source of information on influenza. It is a not-for-profit organisation made up of leading medical and scientific specialists from Australia and New Zealand, who have a particular expertise in infectious and respiratory diseases and virology. It is highly regarded among medical and consumer audiences.

The ISG's aims include:

- raising awareness among healthcare professionals and the general public regarding the prevention and treatment of influenza.
- facilitating (and where possible, implementing) measures to effectively protect the community against influenza by encouraging cooperation between the health community, government and the pharmaceutical industry.

MISSION

- increase understanding of the impact of influenza and its relationship to other infectious respiratory diseases.
- reduce the public health impact of influenza through increased awareness among consumers and healthcare professionals and of best practice in the prevention and treatment of influenza.
- influence policy development in the area of infectious respiratory diseases, based on scientific studies and available evidence.

The following people are most at risk and probably qualify for free vaccine under the Australian Government's National Immunisation Program (NIP):

- people aged 65 and over, and people who live in nursing homes or long term residential care
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- pregnant women
- people with low immunity
- anyone with existing medical conditions, such as heart disease; lung conditions, such as asthma or COPD; illnesses that require regular visits to the doctor, such as diabetes; and people with chronic neuromuscular conditions, such as MS

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INFLUENZA AWARENESS PROGRAM

The Influenza Awareness Program is a public awareness campaign aimed at educating the community about the potential severity and consequences of influenza and the importance of prevention and appropriate treatment. The program also seeks to enhance awareness of influenza amongst healthcare workers.

Launched in 1992, the program has been conducted by the ISG in conjunction with high profile professional organisations such as the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, and enlists the support of major patient advocacy groups, such as the National Asthma Council Australia, Australian Lung Foundation, the Heart Foundation and Diabetes Australia to target specific 'at risk' Australians.

ANNUAL SCIENTIFIC FORUM

Each year the ISG organises a scientific forum, which enables updating of information and discussion on a variety of influenza related issues. Attendees and presenters include ISG members and affiliates, invited members of the wider scientific and medical community, government health officials, pharmaceutical industry representatives, academics, and delegates from other health-related NGO's.

EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

The ISG continues to develop a range of educational resources, including discussion papers, consumer brochures and posters, and videos. All are available (some translated in to other languages) on the resources section of the ISG's website: **www.influenzaspecialistgroup.org.au**.

Influenza should not be confused with the common cold. Influenza can cause serious illness, and in some cases lead to hospitalisation and death.

The ISG receives in-kind support from a variety of sources, as well as funding from a number of pharmaceutical companies; through its Board of Directors, the ISG maintains full control over all of its activities and published materials.



Influenza Specialist Group

For further information: Kim Sampson, Executive Officer
Suite 104, 153-161 Park Street, South Melbourne VIC 3205
Tel (03) 9929 4350 Fax (03) 9929 4355 Email kim@isg.org.au