

Can being vaccinated cause the flu?

No, it can't. The vaccine does not contain any live viruses and therefore can't cause flu.

Will there be any side effects to the vaccine?

Side effects are generally very mild and short-lived. The most common is redness and/or swelling at the injection site.

Other less common side effects can include headache, mild fever or sore muscles.

Allergic reactions may occur in people with a severe egg allergy. Check with your doctor if you feel this applies to you.

Can the flu be treated?

Influenza can be treated with antiviral medications. However, to be effective they must be taken within 48 hours of symptoms.

It is therefore important that you see your doctor as quickly as possible if you believe you have the flu.

Note for GPs: There are translated versions of this brochure in the resources section (fact sheets) of the ISG website. Please download and print these on behalf of your patient.

www.influenzaspecialistgroup.org.au/resources

About the Influenza Specialist Group (ISG)

The Influenza Specialist Group (ISG) is a not-for-profit organisation consisting of leading medical and scientific specialists from Australia and New Zealand, with a particular interest in influenza.

The ISG's aims include raising awareness of the prevention and treatment of influenza, and implementing measures to protect the community against influenza.

For more information, visit the ISG's website at www.influenzaspecialistgroup.org.au



Influenza (flu)



What is influenza?

Influenza (also known as the **flu**) is an infection caused by a virus. It's spread from person to person by coughing and sneezing, and by hand contact.

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

Unlike the common cold, it may take several weeks to fully recover from the flu.

What are the symptoms?

If you have the flu you might have:

- a fever
- a cough
- muscle and joint pain
- extreme tiredness
- a headache
- a sore throat

Children can also get diarrhoea and vomiting from the flu.

Who is most at risk?

Anyone can get the flu, even young and healthy people!

However for some people it can have serious complications.

Those most at risk include:

- people over 65, and people who live in nursing homes or long term residential care
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- pregnant women
- anyone with existing medical conditions, such as:
 - heart disease
 - lung conditions, such as asthma or COPD
 - illness that requires regular visits to the doctor (or hospital) such as diabetes
 - neuromuscular conditions, such as MS
- people with low immunity.

If you fall into one of these groups you probably qualify for **free vaccine under the Australian Government's National Influenza Program (NIP).**

Can the flu be prevented?

Yes, the flu can be prevented. The most effective way to prevent the flu is by **vaccination**.

If you **DO** get the flu, you should try to stop it spreading to other people.

You can do this by:

- **throwing away tissues after each use**
- **washing your hands regularly**
- **avoid mixing with other people**
- **only go back to school or work when you are fully recovered**
- **covering your mouth when you cough or sneeze (use your elbow, not your hand!)**

