

# 2024 Seasonal Influenza Vaccination Program

## General Practitioners and Aboriginal Medical Services

**Please distribute to all doctors and staff in your practice**

1. From March 2024, free influenza vaccines will be available to eligible people under the National Immunisation Program.
2. Immunisation providers should target children 6 months to under 5 years, Aboriginal people, pregnant women, people with an increased risk of complications from influenza and people aged 65 years and over.
3. Take the opportunity to ensure your patients are up to date with all vaccinations.
4. Prepare your practice by reviewing the Influenza Vaccination Provider Toolkit 2024 available at <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/flu-provider-toolkit.aspx>
5. Pre-allocations of influenza vaccines should be **confirmed online from 9am Monday 4th March 2024**. Deliveries will begin when the influenza vaccine becomes available. **Pre-allocation confirmation closes at 4.30pm Friday 15th March 2024.**

### 2024 Influenza vaccination

- Annual influenza vaccination from mid-April is the single most effective way to protect your patients and others from severe influenza and prevent hospitalisations and deaths.
- Equip yourself to make strong influenza vaccine recommendations, your vaccine recommendations matter. Refer to <https://www.ncirs.org.au/ncirs-fact-sheets-fags-and-other-resources/influenza> for more information. A suite of vaccination communication support tools for health professionals is also available at <https://skai.org.au/healthcare-professionals>.
- Promote childhood influenza vaccinations, in 2023 in NSW only 26.8% of children aged 6 months to under 5 years were vaccinated against influenza.
- Children aged 6 months to less than 9 years of age receiving influenza vaccine for the first time need 2 doses at least 4 weeks apart. This maximises the immune response to the vaccine strains.

### Eligibility and priority groups

- Influenza vaccination is recommended for all people aged 6 months and over.
- People at higher risk of serious influenza complications are eligible for free influenza vaccination under the National Immunisation Program.
- Prioritise all children 6 months to under 5 years, Aboriginal people, pregnant women at any stage of pregnancy, people aged 65 years and over and people with chronic medical conditions attending your practice.

- Discuss influenza vaccination with other present family members.
- More information about key at risk groups will be published in the ATAGI 2024 *Statement On The Administration of Seasonal Influenza Vaccines* available from early March at <https://www.health.gov.au/committees-and-groups/australian-technical-advisory-group-on-immunisation-atagi>.

## Co-administration with COVID-19 and other vaccines

- Influenza vaccines can be co-administered with COVID-19 vaccines.
- Take the opportunity to ensure your patients are up to date with all of their vaccinations.
- If co-administering influenza and COVID-19 vaccines, consider offering other vaccines on a separate visit to reduce the risk of adverse events.
- For more information visit, <https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/covid-19-vaccines/advice-for-providers/clinical-guidance>.

## Preparing your practice

- Read the **NSW Health 2024 Influenza Vaccination Provider Toolkit** available at <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/flu-provider-toolkit.aspx>
- Ensure your practice software can report vaccinations to the **Australian Immunisation Register (AIR)**. Reporting of all vaccinations is mandatory. Further information is available at <https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/proda-provider-digital-access>.
- Aboriginal Medical Services will also need to complete the *Australian Immunisation Register Application to Register as a Vaccination Provider* available at <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/application-air-provider.aspx>.
- Ensure your practice is **registered for online vaccine ordering with the NSW Vaccine Centre** (<https://nsw.tollhealthcare.com/>). If you have not already registered for online ordering, visit <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/vaccine-ordering.aspx> for information on how to register. Faxed orders are no longer available and will not be accepted.
- Visit our frequently asked questions and answers about influenza vaccination at <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/seasonal-flu-vaccination-faqs.aspx>.

## Ordering influenza vaccine

- Your first order will be pre-allocated to ensure equitable and timely vaccine distribution to all providers in NSW.
- Due to the timing of initial vaccine supplies into the NSW vaccine centre, pre-allocations will be reduced on previous years. Subsequent orders can be made online once you have received your initial order, however **subsequent orders** will only be delivered once all pre-allocated flu orders have been distributed. Only order enough vaccines required for use in a maximum four-week period.
- From **Thursday 29th February 2024** you will receive email instructions from the NSW Vaccine Centre with details on how to accept your pre-allocation, please check your junk folder.
- You will be able to review and confirm your **pre-allocation at 9am Monday 4<sup>th</sup> March 2024** as per the email instructions from NSW Vaccine Centre. **Only** confirmed orders will be delivered.
- **Pre-allocation confirmation will close at 4.30pm Friday 15th March 2024**, after this date we will return to routine ordering and delivery.
- There may be limits placed on subsequent orders to ensure equitable vaccine distribution to all providers in NSW.
- **Please only schedule influenza vaccination clinics once vaccine supplies are received.**

## Vaccine deliveries

- Influenza vaccine deliveries will commence when the vaccines become available, and orders will be despatched to practices who have reviewed and confirmed their first order allocation.
- Due to the volume of orders at the beginning of the season, it takes around four weeks for the NSW Vaccine Centre to deliver all first influenza vaccine orders.
- Vaccines **MUST** be stored in their original packaging; this helps to protect them from temperature fluctuations and UV light. For further information, please see the National Vaccine Storage Guidelines *Strive for 5*, <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-vaccine-storage-guidelines-strive-for-5?language=en>.

## Further information

- NSW Health Influenza Immunisation website [www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/flu.aspx](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/flu.aspx).
- NSW Health Influenza website [www.health.nsw.gov.au/flu](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/flu).
- Contact your local Public Health Unit on **1300 066 055**.