



www.fightflu.co.nz

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If you're eligible, get your free flu shot now

The Immunisation Advisory Centre (IMAC) says it's great the influenza "flu" vaccine is available early. New Zealanders at highest risk of complications from influenza, and those in contact with high risk people, particularly healthcare staff, can now get vaccinated as soon as possible.

From today onwards, influenza immunisation is **free** from general practices or participating pharmacies for eligible patients over three years of age and older.

A children's vaccine will be available for eligible children aged six to 35 months from **April 1**.

The groups eligible for **free** vaccine are:

- pregnant women,
- all people aged 65 years and over,
- people aged under 65 years with heart or respiratory disease, severe asthma, diabetes, cancer and other serious medical conditions. See list of conditions at www.fightflu.co.nz

"It is important that people in these groups have priority for access and it is great to see that there will be some pharmacies able to give funded flu vaccines to a broader group this year which will include eligible people aged 13 years to 65 plus with certain ongoing medical conditions," comments IMAC director, Dr Nikki Turner.

People who are not eligible for free immunisation, can purchase a flu shot from their general practice or a participating pharmacy from **April 13**. Many employers will also provide influenza immunisation free to staff.

Pharmacies that have a contract with their district health board (DHB) to give funded influenza immunisation to people 65 years and over and pregnant women, have had an amendment made to their contracts by the DHBs to enable them to also vaccinate those eligible patients under 65 years at high risk.

"Healthcare workers, and other staff in contact with patients in aged care facilities or working in disability support services, should also be vaccinated early as we need to keep our health system at full capacity this winter to cope with the added challenges of coronavirus (COVID-19)."

These vaccines are available from their workplace, occupational health programme funded by their employer, or paid for privately from their GP surgery or pharmacy vaccinator.

Influenza immunisation offers the best protection from the four influenza strains health experts believe are most likely to circulate this season.

If you are sick, staying away from others, regular handwashing or use of hand sanitisers and covering your mouth and nose when sneezing or coughing also help reduce the spread of influenza.

The influenza vaccine is a prescription medicine. Talk to your doctor, nurse, midwifery nurse or pharmacist about the benefits and possible risks.

Check out www.fightflu.co.nz to find out whether you qualify for free flu immunisation or call 0800 IMMUNE 0800 466 863. For more information on COVID-19 go to www.health.govt.nz

Ends

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