

Monday, 29 June 2020

Flu vaccine urged for over 65s and Indigenous Australians

There is still time for older people, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and others at high risk of influenza complications to protect themselves with a free flu jab this winter.

General Practitioner and Brisbane North PHN Board Chair Dr Anita Green said it was especially important to be vigilant about flu vaccination during this year's pandemic.

"Contracting both COVID-19 and the flu at the same time could be fatal, even for the fittest of us," Dr Green said.

"People aged 65 years or older can now get a special Quadrivalent Influenza Vaccine from their GP or other immunisation provider," she said.

"This new flu vaccine provides enhanced protection for older people and, best of all, it's free.

"Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are also highly vulnerable to respiratory illness, so influenza vaccination is free for this population group as well, from six months of age.

"Remember that it is safe to visit your GP.

"General Practices now have ample personal protective equipment, like masks and gowns, and new infection control processes are in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Sanitation is paramount.

"Patients just need to remember to phone ahead to book an appointment.

"This will allow general practice staff to check the vaccine is in stock and assess whether patients have any flu or COVID-19 symptoms before they come to the clinic," she said.

Other flu vaccine providers include Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Services, community pharmacies and local council immunisation clinics. Check relevant websites for details.

Immunisation lowers a person's risk of infection from a vaccine preventable disease. It is a safe and effective way to protect yourself and the community against many serious illnesses.

In Australia, influenza on average causes 1,500 to 3,000 deaths, about 18,000 hospitalisations and 300,000 GP consultations each year [[source: Influenza Specialist Group, updated 25 March 2020](#)].

The [National Immunisation Program](#) provides free flu vaccines to those most at risk, including:

- pregnant women at any stage of pregnancy
- all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged six months and older
- people aged 65 years and older

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- people aged six months and older with certain medical risk factors, and
- for the first time, all children aged between six months and five years.

For more information about vaccine safety, go to <http://www.ausvaxsafety.org.au/>.

ENDS

Editor's note:

A press quality image of Dr Anita Green is available for download from Dropbox here:
<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/uus72npb51b7bbg/AADA1QzSI1DmBF83HdZAOxP0a?dl=0>

About Brisbane North PHN

Brisbane North PHN is one of 31 Primary Health Networks nationwide and supports clinicians and communities within North Brisbane, Moreton Bay and parts of the Somerset region. The PHN covers approximately 4,100 km² of urban, regional and rural areas, with a population of over one million.

The key objectives of the PHN are:

- increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of medical services for patients, particularly those at risk of poor health outcomes, and
- improving coordination of care to ensure patients receive the right care in the right place at the right time.