

Four good reasons why you should get the flu shot

Information for staff

Everyone has a role to play when it comes to preventing the spread of flu and other diseases. Here's why you should become a role model for your friends, family and colleagues:

1. The flu can be serious

An average of 2,800 Australians die from influenza and pneumonia every year.

Some people are at greater risk of influenza complications. If you catch flu, apart from feeling dreadful yourself, you risk spreading it to vulnerable people at risk of serious complications. If you come into contact with infants, pregnant women, older people or immune-compromised people while you have flu you are putting them at risk.

Apart from that, it takes an average of two weeks to recover from flu. That's a long time for work and chores to pile up.

If you get the flu shot:

- you can avoid spreading it to at-risk people
- you can avoid feeling awful yourself
- you can avoid having to put your life on hold.

2. You can't get sick from the flu shot

It is not possible to get the flu from getting the flu shot. The vaccine does not contain any active virus.

The vaccine contains particles of killed viruses, so it cannot cause influenza. Some people can experience side effects from the vaccine, which include pain, redness and swelling at the injection site, low grade temperature, muscle aches and/or drowsiness.

It takes about two weeks for immunity to develop after getting the flu shot, so if you do get flu soon after getting your shot, it's because your immunity was not yet fully developed.

3. You need the flu shot every year

Influenza viruses change frequently therefore the influenza vaccine is usually updated every year (depending on the circulating strains). Having an influenza vaccine every year in Autumn is recommended, particularly for those in the high risk groups. Protection develops about two weeks after being given the injection and lasts up to a year, which makes it important to be vaccinated every year.

4. It's free for some people

The National Immunisation Program Schedule provides free influenza vaccine for people at greater risk of influenza complications. This includes:

- all people aged 65 years and older
- pregnant women
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 15 years and older
- everyone aged from six months and over with medical conditions that put them at risk of complications from influenza infection.

Some workplaces provide free influenza vaccine to their staff. You can also get influenza vaccine by visiting your doctor. The vaccine costs around \$20 plus the cost of the doctor's visit.

Further information on influenza and vaccination is available at:

<http://www.health.vic.gov.au/immunisation/factsheets/factsheets/influenza>