



The Hon. Greg Hunt MP

Minister for Health

Minister for Sport

MEDIA RELEASE

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Protecting Australians from influenza in 2017

The Australian Government has secured a supply of new vaccines which protect against four strains of influenza virus for the 2017 season.

The new vaccines will be made available free of charge from mid-April to at-risk groups through the National Immunisation Program (NIP) and will also be available on the private market.

The 2017 quadrivalent influenza vaccines will cover two A strains of influenza (Michigan and Hong Kong) and two B strains of influenza (Brisbane and Phuket), as recommended by the World Health Organization.

Influenza is a significant cause of illness and death and we know that getting an annual flu vaccine is the best way to protect yourself, your family and the community from the virus.

Around 4.5 million doses of seasonal influenza vaccines will be made available in 2017 through the National Immunisation Program.

The best advice from medical experts is that it's important to get a flu shot every year as the circulating viruses change.

Influenza is estimated to be responsible for more than 5,000 hospitalisations and almost 170 deaths in Australia each year.

The burden of influenza on Australians varies from year to year, depending on the predominant circulating subtype. People affected are most commonly young children and older adults. Pregnant women are at particularly high risk of becoming seriously ill with influenza.

The pharmaceutical companies GlaxoSmithKline, Sanofi and Seqirus will be supplying 'flu vaccines for the national program in 2017.

This year there will be four age-specific vaccines available under the NIP:

- GSK will supply Fluarix Tetra for eligible people aged three years and older.
- Sanofi will supply FluQuadri for eligible people aged three years and older, and FluQuadri Junior for eligible children aged six months to less than three years.
- Seqirus will supply Afluria Quad for eligible people aged 18 years and older.

Receiving the vaccine from April allows protection from the flu to develop well ahead of the peak transmission period, which usually falls around August.

All Australians should consider getting a flu vaccine as the more people who get vaccinated against the flu, the less it spreads through the community, which means we are all better protected.

People at high risk of complications from the flu and associated illnesses should ask their doctor or vaccination provider for advice about their specific circumstances and their eligibility for a free vaccination.

For more information about influenza and immunisation visit the Immunise Australia website at: www.immunise.health.gov.au

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