



PRIMARY CARE PREPAREDNESS

WINTER PREPAREDNESS

April 2024

The combination of Influenza and COVID-19 can be life threatening, especially for vulnerable people. Vaccination against both is critical for people to not only protect themselves, but to reduce the risk of spread to others. Influenza vaccines can be given at the same time as others, including diphtheria (dTpa), respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), pneumococcal and COVID-19. For more information see the [Australian Immunisation Handbook](#).

The flu vaccine is free to eligible groups through the National Immunisation Program (NIP), including:

- All Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged six months and older
- Pregnant women during any stage of pregnancy
- All people aged 65 years and older
- People aged six months and over with medical conditions that may increase the risk of complications from severe influenza
- Children aged 6 months to less than 5 years.

2024 influenza vaccination program advice

Flucelvax Quad®, a cell-based vaccine, is now funded for people aged 5-64 years with medical conditions, putting them at increased risk of complications from influenza. There is no preferential recommendation between Flucelvax Quad® and standard dose of egg-based influenza vaccines

National Immunisation Program influenza vaccines by age group

Check you have the correct vaccine for your patient's age.

2024 NIP-funded eligibility

Age group	Quadrivalent influenza vaccines (QIVs)			
	Fluad® Quad 0.50 mL (Seqirus)	Fluarix® Tetra 0.50 mL (GSK)	Flucelvax® Quad 0.50 mL (Seqirus)	Vaxigrip Tetra® 0.50 mL (Sanofi)
6 months to <5 years	DO NOT USE	✓	NOT FUNDED	✓
5 to <65 years	DO NOT USE	✓	✓	✓
65 years and over	✓	NOT FUNDED	NOT FUNDED	NOT FUNDED

Note: Other influenza vaccines that are not NIP-funded are available in the Australian market in 2024. For further information, refer to the ATAGI clinical statement on the administration of seasonal influenza vaccines in 2024 available at health.gov.au/influenza-resources and the Australian Immunisation Handbook – [Influenza \(Flu\)](#).

Vaccine supply

Influenza vaccines are available for order from 9.30am on Tuesday 2 April 2024 via [Onelink](#).

Changes to **vaccine ordering protocols in Victoria** came into effect from 1 March 2024:

- Immunisation providers are eligible for two vaccine orders per month during the influenza season (April-June 2024)
- Vaccine orders must be placed at least 14 days apart
- Orders should include all government-funded vaccines required to meet your monthly vaccine requirements, including influenza and Shingrix
- To read the changes that have been made to vaccine distribution services, see the [Vaccine Distribution Update](#)
- The influenza vaccine is listed on the online ordering template
- Note all 2023 influenza vaccines are now expired. To prevent any administration errors, discard all expired stock appropriately.

AIR

It is now mandatory for all administered vaccines to be reported to the Australian Immunisation Register from 1 March 2024. Reporting includes:

- Information about the vaccine type for all vaccines prescribed by the AIR Rule including COVID-19, Influenza, National Immunisation Program (NIP) and Japanese Encephalitis Virus (JEV) vaccines.

COVID-19 recommendations

Booster doses

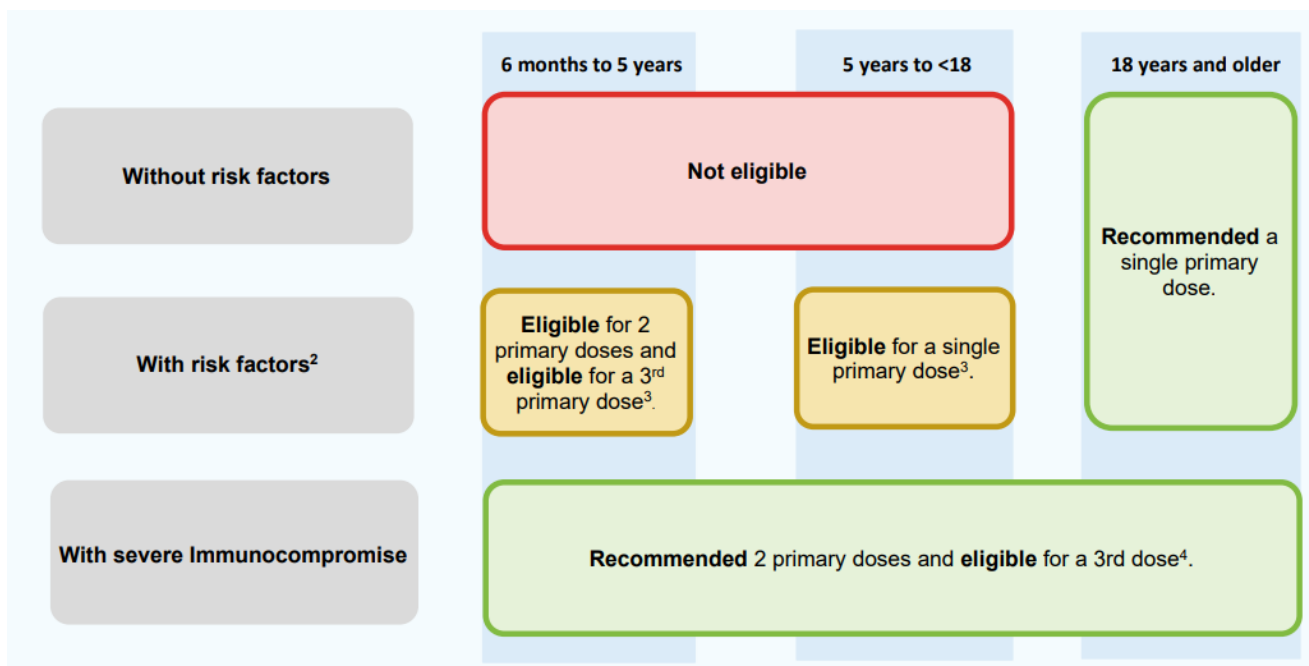
	< 5 years	5 to 17 years	18 to 64 years	65 to 74 years	≥ 75 years
Without severe immunocompromise	Not recommended	Not recommended	Eligible for a dose every 12 months ²	Recommended every 12 months and eligible for a dose every 6 months ⁴ .	Recommended every 6 months.
With severe immunocompromise	Not recommended	Eligible for a dose every 12 months ²	Recommended every 12 months and eligible for a dose every 6 months ³	Recommended every 12 months and eligible for a dose every 6 months ⁴ .	Recommended every 6 months.

Notes:

1. Monovalent Omicron XBB.1.5 vaccines are preferred; for ages in which a monovalent XBB.1.5-containing vaccine is not available, [use other vaccines approved for that age group](#).
2. Consider dose based on an individual risk benefit assessment with an immunisation provider.
3. People with severe immunocompromise, who are aged between 18 to 64 years, are recommended a dose every 12 months and are eligible for a dose every 6 months based on an individual risk-benefit assessment. Please refer to the [Australian Immunisation Handbook](#) for further information.
4. People aged between 65 and 74 years are recommended a dose every 12 months and are eligible for a dose every 6 months based on an individual risk-benefit assessment. Please refer to the [Australian Immunisation Handbook](#) for further information.

Information current as of 1 March 2024

Primary course



Notes:

1. Monovalent Omicron XBB.1.5 vaccines are preferred; for ages in which a monovalent XBB.1.5-containing vaccine is not available, use other vaccines approved for that age group.
2. Includes those with a medical condition that increases the risk of severe COVID-19 illness (refer to Australian Immunisation Handbook) or those with disability with significant or complex health needs or multiple comorbidities which increase the risk of poor outcomes from COVID-19.
3. Consider dose based on an individual risk benefit assessment with an immunisation provider.
4. People with severe immunocompromise, who are over 6 months of age, are recommended 2 primary doses and are eligible for a 3rd primary dose based on an individual risk-benefit assessment. Please refer to the Australian Immunisation Handbook for further information.

Information current as of 1 March 2024.

How to order COVID-19 vaccines

New and recommencing practices, and sites wishing to withdraw, should contact Murray PHN e: primarycareresponse@murrayphn.org.au

Changes to vaccine products or removing access to vaccines (to reduce stock reporting) can be made in the COVID-19 Vaccine Administration System (CVAS).

Pneumococcal

Pneumococcal disease is a bacterial infection, that is especially serious for young children and older people. It can cause pneumonia, bloodstream infection and meningitis (inflammation of the membranes around the brain).

The Australian Immunisation Handbook recommends pneumococcal vaccination for specific groups including:

- routine vaccination in infants and children
- non-Indigenous adults aged 70 years and older
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults aged 50 years and older
- children, adolescents and adults with risk conditions for pneumococcal disease.

There are two types of pneumococcal vaccines provided free under the NIP: Prevenar 13 (13vPCV) and Pneumovax 23 (23vPPV), for different age groups and circumstances:

- all children at 2, 4 and 12 months of age (3 doses in total)
- an extra dose at 6 months for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who live in Queensland, Northern Territory, Western Australia or South Australia, in addition to the 3 doses for all children (4 doses in total)
- children under 12 months who have certain medical conditions that put them at higher risk of getting serious pneumococcal disease (6 doses in total over a number of years)
- all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 50 years or older (3 doses in total)
- all non-Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 70 years or older (1 dose)
- all people 12 months and over who have who have certain medical conditions that put them at higher risk of getting serious pneumococcal disease (3 doses in total).

Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV)

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) is a common virus that infects the airways and lungs. It is highly contagious and spreads easily if an infected person produces small water droplets while talking, coughing and sneezing. Regular handwashing and good personal hygiene helps stop the spread and the main treatment for RSV infection is rest and plenty of fluids.

For information about prevention, symptoms, diagnosis and treatment, [see healthdirect's RSV page](#)

Currently, the only vaccination available for RSV is Arexvy (GlaxoSmithKline), a recombinant RSV vaccine containing 120 µg of the pre-fusion F protein antigen (RSVPreF3) with AS01E adjuvant.⁴ Arexvy is administered as a single dose of 0.5 mL by intramuscular injection and may be given at any time of the year. It was registered for use with the TGA in January 2024 for adults aged ≥60 years and is available through private prescription from 28 February 2024. Currently it is not funded by the National Immunisation Program (NIP).

Vaccination campaign

Murray PHN's free vaccination campaign 'Avoid double trouble' to encourage people to get vaccinated against the flu and COVID-19 is still available to use:

- [Social media tile](#)
- [Digital A4 flyer](#)
- [Poster A4 for in-house printing](#)
- [Poster A4 for professional printing](#)

Murray HealthPathways

- [Influenza](#)
- [Immunisation – Influenza](#)
- [Immunisation Suite](#)
- [Child - Respiratory Suite](#)
- [Adult Respiratory Suite](#)
- [COVID-19 Suite](#)

To request free access to Murray HealthPathways, [click here](#).

For more information and resources

Immunisation education:

- [COVID-19 Vaccination training program](#)
- Melbourne Vaccine Education Centre: [Use of Multidose vials](#)
- Victorian Department of Health: [Cold Chain Management eLearning modules](#)
- Melbourne Vaccine Education Centre: [Shoulder Injury Related to Vaccine Administration \(SIRVA\)](#)

For more, visit the [Victorian Immunisation Learning Hub](#)

Influenza:

- Australian Department of Health: [Information about influenza vaccines](#) and [2024 Influenza vaccination program advice for health professionals](#)
- ATAGI: [ATAGI statement on the administration of seasonal influenza vaccines in 2024](#)
- Murray HealthPathways: [Influenza](#) and [Immunisation - Influenza](#)
- Murray PHN Focus On [Immunisation and winter wellness](#)
- RACGP: [Flu season 2024 resources](#)
- Victorian Department of Health: [Immunisation Victoria newsletter subscription](#); [Seasonal Influenza vaccine information](#) and [Stay Well This Winter Campaign Toolkit](#)
- NSW Health: [Seasonal influenza vaccine and ordering processes](#)
- Coordinare: [Preparing for Winter Quality Improvement Toolkit for General Practice](#)

Resources for health professionals - chronic airway management in the winter months

National Asthma Council Australia:

- [Asthma Asthma Action Plan \(colour\)](#)
- [Asthma Asthma Action Plan \(black & white\)](#)
- [NAC Asthma Action Plan \(writable*\)](#)
- [Written Asthma Action Plan \(RTF version\)](#)
- [Health Professional resources](#)
- [Education and training](#)

Lung Foundation:

- [COPD Action Plan](#)
- [My COPD Checklist](#)
- [COPD The Basics](#)
- [Understanding COPD](#)

For more support

Immunisation providers can email: primarycareresponse@murrayphn.org.au

For assistance to review your practice systems in the context of the pandemic and flu season and implement improvements to ensure your practice is best placed to provide your patients with the right care at the right time, e: gpsupport@murrayphn.org.au