

# WINTER IMMUNITY FOR A SAFER COMMUNITY



## FACTSHEET

### HOW COMMON IS THE FLU?

Influenza is a highly-contagious viral infection that infects the upper airways and lungs. Queensland is recording a worse-than-usual winter flu season in 2024. Cases across the Sunshine Coast, Wide Bay and Central Queensland are higher, on average, than in previous years.

### WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Flu symptoms include fever, dry cough, muscle and joint pain, tiredness or extreme exhaustion, headache and sore throat. In the elderly, fever may be absent and the only sign may be confusion, shortness of breath and a worsening chronic condition. Children are more likely to have gastrointestinal symptoms (nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea).

### HOW SERIOUS IS IT?

Most people will feel unwell and be out of action for about a week, however the flu can have more serious health effects, including pneumonia. In some cases it can lead to death. Those at higher risk of developing complications include pregnant women, First Nations people, those with underlying medical conditions or a disability, older people and young children aged under 5.

### HOW CAN I PROTECT MYSELF?

Flu is the most common vaccine-preventable disease in Australia. Getting vaccinated against the flu every year protects you and the people around you, guarding against the virus in the majority of cases and substantially reducing the severity of the illness in those who do catch it. Being vaccinated during pregnancy will help protect your baby during their first six months and it is safe for breastfeeding mothers.

**MYTH** The flu is not a serious illness



**FACT** The flu is highly contagious and potentially life-threatening. The best way to protect yourself against flu is to get vaccinated every year and practise good hygiene.

### IS IT SAFE? WILL IT GIVE ME THE FLU?

The flu vaccine is safe for everyone aged six months and older and has passed strict safety testing before being approved for use in Australia. Flu vaccines approved for use in Australia do not contain the live flu virus. You cannot catch the flu from the vaccine.

### WILL THE FLU VACCINE MAKE MY CHRONIC CONDITION WORSE?

Vaccines are strongly recommended for people with chronic health conditions. You are at more risk of complications if you have a medical condition. You can become very sick, even if your condition is well managed. You should discuss specific concerns with your doctor.

### WHAT ABOUT NATURAL IMMUNITY?

Natural immunity wanes. Vaccines work to bolster your immunity, giving you greater protection. Older adults and young children are at higher risk of developing serious complications from flu, partly due to their weaker immune systems. Flu can cause serious illness and even death in healthy children because of the time it takes their immune system to respond.

### CAN I GET THE FLU VACCINE AT THE SAME TIME AS THE COVID-19 VACCINE?

Yes, the flu vaccine can be given at the same time as a Covid-19 vaccine. Similarly, there is no requirement to wait between having had a Covid-19 infection and then having the flu shot. Once you are feeling well and have no fever, you can get an influenza vaccine.

### ARE THERE SIDE EFFECTS?

You may experience minor side effects. The most common side effects include tiredness, muscle aches, pain, redness and swelling at the injection site and mild fever.

### WHERE CAN I GET VACCINATED?

The vaccine is free for all Queenslanders before 30 September 2024 and can be accessed at your GP or local pharmacy. If you have further questions, talk to your trusted healthcare professional.