

# 2022 INFLUENZA VACCINE INFORMATION SHEET

Influenza (commonly known as the flu), is an infection of the nose, throat and sometimes lungs caused by flu viruses. It spreads very easily and quickly between people through coughing, talking, sneezing and contact with contaminated hands, tissues, and other infected items. The flu can cause serious illness and complications for anyone, but some groups of people, such as older people, people with chronic illnesses and pregnant women are at even higher risk of serious flu infection, complications and hospitalisation.

## **Influenza vaccine**

The flu vaccine is given as an injection into the top of the arm. It is a dead vaccine which provides protection against four different strains of the flu without being able to give you the flu. The strains in this year's vaccines are:

- A/Victoria/2019 (H1N1)
- A/Darwin/2021 (H3N2)
- B/Austria/2021 (Victoria lineage)
- B/Phuket/2013 (Yamagata lineage)

Flu viruses are always changing. Each year's flu vaccine is made to protect against the four flu viruses that are likely to cause disease that year. It cannot prevent all cases of flu, but it is the best defence against the disease. Flu vaccination is recommended every year. It takes about 2 weeks for protection to develop after the vaccination, and protection lasts several months to a year. Some illnesses that are not caused by influenza virus are often mistaken for flu. Flu vaccine will not prevent these illnesses. The vaccine can only prevent influenza.

## **Special information for people aged over 65**

People aged over 65 are more likely to get very sick from the flu and traditional vaccines don't work as well in older people. As a result, there is a stronger vaccine recommended for older people which is only available from GPs. We recommend people over 65 get this vaccine from their GP, but if this is not possible, the vaccine provided by VaxWorks provides more protection than not getting vaccinated at all.

## **Who should NOT be vaccinated?**

People who are allergic to influenza vaccines or any of the components in the vaccine should NOT be vaccinated. People who have previously had Guillian-Barré syndrome should seek specialist medical advice before receiving vaccination.

## **People with egg allergies**

People with egg allergy, including a history of anaphylaxis, can be safely vaccinated with influenza vaccines.

## **Flu vaccine and COVID-19 vaccine**

Receiving a COVID-19 vaccine on the same day, or within a few days of a flu vaccine is safe and effective. However, it may lead to an increase in common side effects.

## **Possible side effects of the flu vaccine**

Like any medications, the flu vaccine can have some minor and short-lasting side effects. Common side effects may include:

- pain, redness and swelling at the injection site
- drowsiness, tiredness, or irritability
- muscle aches
- low grade fever of 37 to 38 degrees celsius

Some side effects may appear as 'flu-like' symptoms, but all flu vaccines currently available in Australia do not contain live virus and cannot cause the flu.

## **Reducing the side effects of the flu vaccine**

Many of the common side effects can often be reduced by:

- drinking extra fluids
- resting
- taking paracetamol as per the instructions on the packet/bottle

(2022 Flu Info Sheet v1)