

# Aged Care Facilities and Influenza

## **Annual flu vaccination is recommended for all residents**

Annual flu vaccination for residents is an important measure to help protect people vulnerable to severe flu and prevent flu outbreaks.

There is one vaccine available for people aged 65 years and over which is funded on the National Immunisation Program. This is a quadrivalent influenza vaccine called Flud Quad®. This vaccine covers two influenza A viruses and two influenza B viruses. The vaccine has been specifically designed to create a greater immune response amongst the elderly, who are known to have a weaker response to immunisation.

## **Annual flu vaccination is recommended for all staff**

Annual flu vaccination is recommended for all healthcare providers, staff and volunteers who work in Aged Care Facilities. This has the dual benefit of reducing flu illness in staff members, and helps prevent the spread of flu from staff to vulnerable residents.

This includes;

- Administrative staff, doctors, nurses, care assistants and allied health workers
- Cleaning and kitchen staff, religious workers and other volunteers
- Temporary, part-time and casual workers, especially as they may work at multiple facilities

## **Encourage family and friends to get an annual flu vaccination**

Staff should encourage family and friends of residents to get a flu vaccine each year, to prevent the spread of flu to vulnerable residents. They should also be reminded to delay visiting the facility if they are experiencing cold or flu symptoms until they are completely recovered.

As of 2021, flu vaccination to enter an aged care facility is **not** mandatory, but is highly encouraged.

## **Respiratory virus outbreaks – prepare, identify and manage**

Outbreaks of flu in Aged Care Facilities in Australia each year leads to illness, hospitalisations and unfortunately deaths. Having an Influenza Management Plan/COVID-19 Management Plan in place is valuable preparation for an outbreak of serious respiratory outbreaks such as influenza or COVID-19. High flu vaccination coverage will help protect residents against flu.

Early identification of a flu outbreak is important. If a flu outbreak is suspected, remember that outbreak control measures are most effective when started straight away. Consult your facility's Aged Care Toolkit for Respiratory Outbreaks for assistance in preparing and responding to a respiratory virus outbreak, such as flu or COVID-19.

## **Contact the Communicable Diseases Prevention Unit (CDPU) early for advice**

CDPU are available to give advice on managing and controlling outbreaks of flu in Aged Care Facilities. CDPU can also provide advice on managing and controlling outbreaks of other influenza-like illnesses (ILI) if you require. Suspected cases of COVID-19 must be reported to Public Health via the Public Health Hotline **1800 671 738**

## **For further information please:**

- Speak to your doctor or clinic nurse
- See the DoH Influenza website [www.flu.tas.gov.au](http://www.flu.tas.gov.au)
- Call the Public Health Hotline - Tasmania on **1800 671 738**
- Call Immunise Australia on 1800 671 811 or go to <https://beta.health.gov.au/health-topics/immunisation>

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