



Influenza Fact Sheet 2026

The flu is a highly contagious viral infection that can cause severe illness and life-threatening complications. It is spread by contact with respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It is estimated that the flu contributes to over 3,000 deaths and 18,000 hospitalisations in Australia each year.

Immunisation is the best protection against contracting and spreading the flu. Annual immunisation is recommended due to the virus constantly changing, and the vaccines also changing.

> Clinical symptoms:

- Fever and chills
- Headache/dizziness
- Extreme fatigue
- Muscle aches
- Dry cough
- Loss of appetite
- Sore throat (less common)
- Runny nose (less common)

> Complications:

- Bacterial pneumonia
- Bronchitis
- Sinusitis
- Dehydration
- Heart and brain inflammation (rare)

Adverse Effects Of The Vaccine

Localised swelling, pain, redness and induration may occur. Fevers, tiredness and muscle aches can occur in 1-10% of patients lasting 1-2 days. Some patients may experience allergic reactions, usually related to latent egg protein allergies. The strains for the Australian 2026 influenza season will be the following:

- Influenza A (H1N1)pdm09: An A/Missouri/11/2025 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus.
- Influenza A (H3N2):
 - Egg-based: A/Singapore/GP20238/2024 (H3N2)-like virus.
 - Cell-based: A/Sydney/1359/2024 (H3N2)-like virus.
- Influenza B (Victoria Lineage): A B/Austria/1359417/2021 (B/Victoria lineage)-like virus.

Timing Of Vaccine



Annual vaccination should occur before the onset of each influenza season, ideally April – June. The period of peak influenza circulation is then typically June to September in most parts of Australia.



While protection is generally expected to last for the whole season, optimal protection against influenza occurs within the first 3 to 4 months following vaccination.



Vaccination should continue to be offered as long as influenza viruses are circulating and a valid vaccine (before expiration date) is available. Revaccination later in the same year is not routinely recommended, but may benefit some individuals due to personal circumstances, such as travel or pregnancy.