

Influenza (flu) vaccine for children

Have you had the conversation with your PCH nurse or doctor about protecting your child against the flu?

What is influenza (flu)?

Influenza, commonly called “the flu”, is caused by the influenza virus. It can result in an illness that typically affects the nose, throat and lungs and can easily spread within families and the community.

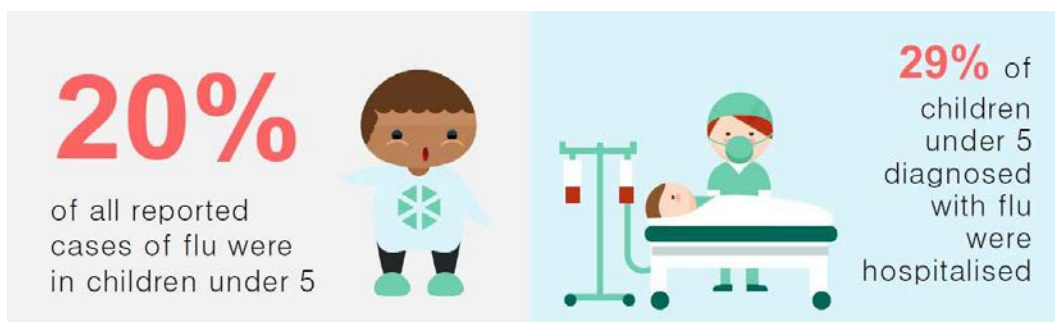
What are the symptoms of the flu?

Symptoms of the flu in children may include:

- a fever that starts suddenly
- headache, muscle aches and tiredness
- irritability and loss of appetite or poor feeding
- cough or noisy breathing
- sore throat and runny nose
- nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea.

How serious is the flu for children?

- Children who catch the flu are frequently admitted to hospital.
- Although some may only get fever, cough and a sore throat, other children develop severe lung infections (pneumonia), seizures or inflammation of the brain.
- The majority of flu-related hospital admissions and deaths occur in healthy children, without underlying medical conditions.



What is the best way to prevent the flu?

- The best way to prevent influenza is to get the flu vaccine at the start of each flu season.
- The vaccine will give your child immunity for up to 6-12 months, therefore getting the flu vaccine each year is important.
- Good hand hygiene and covering your mouth when you cough are also important; however, these are less likely to be practised by younger children.
- Remedies such as vitamin C and Echinacea have failed to show any benefit in preventing the flu.

Did you know the flu vaccine is FREE for children most at risk?

Eligibility for the free flu vaccine on the WA immunisation schedule includes:

- All children aged six months to less than five years of age
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
- Children on long-term aspirin therapy who are under 10 years of age
- Children with a chronic medical condition including:
 - severe asthma or chronic lung disease
 - liver, kidney or heart conditions
 - diseases of the nervous system
 - impaired immunity
 - cancer
 - diabetes
 - metabolic or blood disorders
 - Trisomy 21

Where can my children receive the flu vaccine?

- Drop in to the Stan Perron Immunisation centre at Perth Children's Hospital located on Level 1, Clinic D via the pink or yellow lifts - no appointment or referral is necessary (see eligibility for the free flu vaccine above)

Other community Immunisation providers

- Visit your GP to discuss the flu vaccine; particularly if your child does not fall into one of the above categories, eligible for a free vaccine.
- Local community immunisation clinics www.public.health.wa.gov.au
- Central Immunisation Clinic (contact the clinic to make an appointment)
16 Rheola Street, West Perth. Phone: 9321 1312 Centimm@health.wa.gov.au

What are the possible side effects of the flu vaccine?

Your immunisation provider will ensure it is safe for your child to receive the flu vaccine. If your child has a runny nose, cough or illness without a temperature over 38.5 degrees, it is recommended they still receive the flu vaccine and other scheduled vaccines on time, as per the WA immunisation schedule.

- Some children may have a mild reaction at the injection site. Other side effects may include mild temperature, muscle aches and tiredness.
- The flu vaccine licensed in Australia is 'inactivated,' meaning it is not alive or functioning as a whole virus and cannot give you influenza infection.
- Western Australia has a comprehensive **vaccine safety monitoring system** (WAVSS). Real-time flu vaccine safety surveillance data is available on a weekly basis at www.ausvaxsafety.org.au.

Reported reactions were mild.
Less than **1%** of parents sought medical advice



This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.

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