



# Influenza VIP (vaccination-in-pregnancy)

## Why should I get vaccinated against influenza during my pregnancy?

**Influenza (flu)** is a virus that spreads mainly by coughing, sneezing, and close contact.

Australia's influenza season usually occurs between July and October.

It takes about 2 weeks for protection to develop after vaccination, and protection is expected to last through the influenza season. Protection from the vaccine may start to decrease after 3 to 4 months.

Influenza strikes suddenly and can last several days. Symptoms vary by age, and can include:

- fever
- sore throat
- fatigue
- headache
- chills
- muscle aches
- cough
- runny, stuffy nose.

Getting influenza can cause serious problems for pregnant people. Influenza can cause changes and serious complications in immune, heart, and lung functions, even for healthy people.

Pregnant people who get influenza are at higher risk of hospitalisation, and death, than non-pregnant people. Influenza is also dangerous to your unborn baby as it increases the chance for serious problems, such as premature labour and delivery.

WA research shows that getting the influenza vaccine during pregnancy reduces the risk of stillbirth by 51 per cent. Infants of parents who were vaccinated in the third trimester have a 25 per cent reduction in risk of hospitalisation for acute respiratory infections in their first 6 months of life.

When you get vaccinated during pregnancy, your body will pass on protective antibodies, proteins produced by the body to fight diseases, to your baby through the placenta. This is the most effective way to protect them in their first few months of their life when they are most vulnerable to severe influenza infection and are too young to be fully vaccinated.

The Australian Government and Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists recommend that all pregnant people be offered vaccination against influenza.

## When can I have my influenza vaccine?

Several brands of influenza vaccines are available from April to the end of influenza season. The influenza vaccine can be given at any time during pregnancy. It is recommended to get it during your second or third trimester as serious complications from influenza are most likely to occur during this period.

### **The vaccine cannot cause influenza.**

All influenza vaccines currently registered for use in Australia contain inactivated influenza virus.

As the virus is always changing, a new influenza vaccine is made every year to protect against the strains that are likely to cause illness in the upcoming season. A single dose of influenza vaccine is recommended every influenza season.

Influenza vaccination cannot prevent:

- you contracting influenza caused by a strain not covered by the vaccine
- illnesses that resemble influenza-like symptoms but are not influenza.

## Is this vaccine safe for me and my baby?

Yes. The influenza vaccine has been given safely to millions of pregnant women worldwide over many years and has not caused harm to pregnant women or their babies. Since 2012, the WA Department of Health has monitored the safety of influenza vaccine in over 9,000 pregnant people and have not found serious safety issues following vaccination.

Breastfeeding after getting the influenza vaccine during pregnancy is safe and will pass on more protection against influenza to your baby after birth.

You can safely have the whooping cough, influenza, and maternal RSV vaccine in the same visit when you are 28 to 36 weeks pregnant. You can also get them at different visits, as recommended by your immunisation provider.

The safety of vaccines is always being monitored.

## Where can I get more information?

AusVax Safety: [ausvaxsafety.org.au/safety-data/pregnant-women](https://ausvaxsafety.org.au/safety-data/pregnant-women)

Australian Department of Health: [campaigns.health.gov.au/immunisationfacts/are-vaccines-safe](https://campaigns.health.gov.au/immunisationfacts/are-vaccines-safe)

## Can everyone get the vaccine?

There are some people who should not get the vaccine. Tell the person who is giving you the vaccine if you have ever had:

- a life-threatening allergic reaction after a dose of any influenza vaccine or a severe allergy to any part of this vaccine
- Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) – people with a history of GBS may have a higher chance of developing GBS following influenza vaccination. Patients with GBS are usually hospitalised and the diagnosis must be made by a physician
- a known egg allergy. People with an egg allergy, including anaphylaxis, can be safely vaccinated with influenza vaccines containing less than 1 microgram of residual egg protein per dose.

## Are there any side effects?

There is potential for side effects with any medicine, including vaccines. They are usually mild and go away on their own, and serious reactions are possible but rare. There is a very small chance of a vaccine causing a serious injury or death. Most people who get an influenza vaccine do not have any problems with it.

The most common side effects after influenza vaccination are mild, such as tenderness, redness or swelling where the vaccination was given. Some people might have headaches, muscle aches, fever, nausea, or tiredness. If these symptoms occur, they usually begin soon after the vaccination and last 1 to 2 days. None of the common side effects endanger the baby.

People sometimes faint after a medical procedure, including vaccination. Tell your provider if you feel dizzy, experience vision changes, or hear ringing in your ears.

Sometimes vaccinations can cause serious problems like severe allergic reactions. Life-threatening allergic reactions to vaccines, for example Guillain-Barré syndrome, are very rare – up to one in a million doses of influenza vaccine.

Always tell the person giving the vaccine if you have any severe allergies or if you have ever had a severe allergic reaction following a vaccination.

Some people get severe pain or difficulty moving the shoulder where a vaccine was given. This happens very rarely.

## What if there is a serious reaction? What should I look for?

Look out for signs of a severe allergic reaction, high fever, unusual behaviour, and anything that concerns you.

Signs of a severe allergic reaction can include hives, swelling of the face and throat, difficulty breathing, a fast heartbeat, dizziness, and weakness. These usually occur within a few minutes to a few hours after the vaccination.

## What should I do?

Call your immunisation provider if you have a reaction you think is serious or unexpected. Healthdirect is also available on 1800 022 222. For severe reactions, call an ambulance or go to your closest emergency department.

Significant and unexpected reactions should be reported to the Western Australian Vaccine Safety Surveillance (WAVSS) system:

Online portal: [safevac.org.au/Home/Info/WA](https://safevac.org.au/Home/Info/WA)

Email: [wavss@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:wavss@health.wa.gov.au)

Phone (08) 6456 0208

Name of vaccine recipient: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/20\_\_\_\_

Vaccinator's signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Batch number: \_\_\_\_\_ (Apply sticker or write in)

Brand name: ☐ Fluarix Tetra ☐ Vaxigrip Tetra ☐ Flucelvax Quad ☐ Other, please specify: \_\_\_\_\_

You can access your immunisation history statement from Medicare or by calling the Australian Immunisation Register.



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