# Logo: Te Whatu Ora Health New ZealandFlu vaccinations

**April 2023**

## Why it’s important to get a flu jab

Getting a flu jab helps reduce your risk of getting really sick or having to go to hospital.

Getting a flu jab each year is the best way to stop flu from spreading.

Around 4 out of 5 people with flu have no symptoms and don't know they can be spreading the virus to other people.

Being vaccinated reduces the risk of accidentally passing the flu to your whānau, friends, and your community.

## Getting a flu jab

The yearly flu vaccine is free for those who have:

* chronic respiratory disease, includes:
* asthma (if on a regular preventative therapy);
* chronic bronchitis;
* chronic obstructive pulmonary disease;
* cystic fibrosis; and
* emphysema.
* Diabetes;
* Any cancer: however excludes basal and squamous skin cancers if not invasive.
* An autoimmune disease, includes:
* Coeliac disease;
* Crohn’s disease;
* Grave’s disease;
* Hashimoto’s thyroiditis;
* Lupus;
* Rheumatoid Arthritis.

Immune suppression or immune deficiency includes disease modifying anti-rheumatic drugs (DMARDS), or targeted biologic therapies.

* Immune suppression or immune deficiency;
* HIV;
* Down Syndrome;
* Cardiovascular disease, includes:
* ischaemic heart disease;
* congestive heart failure;
* rheumatic heart disease;
* congenital heart disease;
* cerebrovascular disease.
* Chronic Renal disease
* Neuromuscular or CNS disease/disorder
* Haemoglobinopathy, includes:
* sickle cell anaemia; and
* thalassemia.
* Cochlear implant;
* Error of metabolism at risk of major metabolic decompensation;
* Pre, or post-splenectomy.

In 2023, it’s also free for:

* transplant recipients
* children aged 6 months to 12 years old
* pregnant people
* Māori or Pasifika aged 55+.
* [over 65s](https://www.health.govt.nz/your-health/conditions-and-treatments/diseases-and-illnesses/influenza/flu-influenza-vaccines/free-flu-jabs-over-65s-and-maori-or-pasifika-aged-55)

If you're unsure if the flu jab is free for you, chat to your GP or healthcare provider.

If you’re eligible for a free flu jab, contact your GP, healthcare provider or local pharmacy to make a booking.

If you’re not eligible for a free flu jab, and not covered by an employer-funded programme, it costs between $25 and $45 depending on the vaccine and provider.

Contact your GP or local pharmacy to find out how much they charge and when you can book.You can have any COVID-19 vaccination at the same time as your free flu vaccine. There’s no need to leave a gap between these vaccines.

Being up-to-date with all your vaccinations gives you the best possible protection. You’ll need to check the vaccination site is able to administer both before you arrive.

## What to expect when you get your flu jab

If your appointment is at your GP or healthcare provider, a nurse will most likely give you the vaccine. Many local pharmacists also provide flu vaccinations to people aged 3 and older.

After your vaccination, you may be asked to wait for up to 20 minutes so that treatment can be given quickly if a very rare, severe allergic reaction occurs.

Many people aged 13 years and older will only need to wait 5 minutes. Children under 13 years will need to wait 20 minutes.

Avoid driving, cycling, or using any other mobility device for 20 minutes after your vaccination.

## How effective is the flu jab?

Sometimes getting a vaccine won’t stop you getting flu, but it should stop you getting really sick.

It takes up to 2 weeks after getting your jab for your body to start protecting against flu.

For the best protection, you’ll need to get the flu vaccine every year because:

* protection against flu reduces over time;
* each year flu can be caused by different strains of flu viruses that aren’t covered by the previous year’s vaccine.

When the flu strains in the vaccine are a good match to the flu strains circulating in the community:

* around half to two-thirds of healthy vaccinated adults aged under 65 years of age will be protected against flu infection;
* almost two-thirds of vaccinated adults who get flu will be protected from needing hospital care;
* up to two-thirds of children who receive the vaccine will be protected from getting sick with flu;
* about half to two-thirds of the immunised children aged 6 months – 17 years will be protected from needing hospital care for flu.

## Common side effects of the flu jab

Some people don't experience any side effects after a flu jab. But the most common reactions are:

* a sore arm, or pain, itching, or redness at the injection site (1 in 3 adults);
* aches and pains (1 in 10 adults);
* feeling feverish, tired, or unwell.

These are normal responses to the vaccine.

You may be asked to wait 15 to 20 minutes after your vaccination so that treatment can be given quickly if a very rare, severe allergic reaction occurs. Many people aged 13 years and older will only need to wait 5 minutes. Children under 13 years will need to wait 20 minutes.

Allergic responses are extremely rare.

**End of information about: Flu Vaccines**