

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday, 27 March 2025

Falling flu vaccinations and potential horror flu season a recipe for more deaths

Falling influenza immunisation rates due to vaccine fatigue and misinformation, combined with the risk of a horror flu season like the one experienced in the Northern Hemisphere, could result in more lives lost from flu and other respiratory diseases this year.

Australian Medical Association President Dr Danielle McMullen said there had been a fall in the number of Australians receiving their [flu vaccine in 2024 compared to the previous year](#), and that we can't afford to continue the decline.

"We know there's some vaccine fatigue out there following the pandemic, and some wildly misleading and damaging information on social media, and this is contributing to fewer people getting their shots," Dr McMullen said.

"I can't be too blunt about this: [thousands of people die each year from respiratory disease](#) including flu, COVID-19 and RSV. Older people, immunocompromised people, babies, young children, pregnant women and people with underlying medical conditions are particularly vulnerable to some of these respiratory viruses.

"People should get their flu vaccine each year, as the formulation is updated annually to match circulating strains, and the protection from a flu vaccine only lasts a season. This is also a good time to think about a COVID-19 booster, particularly if you are aged over 65 or at higher risk of severe COVID-19.

"Cases of flu pop up all year long, but our peak season is usually from June to September, and the best time to get your flu vaccine is from April onwards.

"People need to start booking appointments now with their GPs, who are trained to ensure that people, including vulnerable cohorts, such as the elderly and children, receive their vaccinations in a safe and timely manner."

Dr McMullen warned there is potential for a horror flu season in Australia following a severe season in the Northern Hemisphere.

"Countries like the United States had a very severe influenza season, with the [Centre for Disease Control estimating](#) at least 41 million illnesses, 540,000 hospitalisations, and 23,000 deaths from influenza during their season so far," Dr McMullen said.

Dr McMullen said it was critical that people were not dissuaded from getting their flu vaccine or other vaccines because of misinformation about vaccines spread on social media, vaccine hesitancy or complacency.

"If people have any concerns, they should speak to their GP who can spend time with them and answer questions," she said.

The Australian Government recommends everyone over the age of six months has an influenza immunisation every year. Flu is the most common illness that can be prevented with a vaccine.

Information about the flu, COVID-19 and RSV vaccines, including who should get vaccines, can be found on the [Department of Health and Aged Care's website](#).

The influenza vaccine is free under the National Immunisation Program for: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples aged six months and over; children aged six months to under five years; pregnant women at any stage of

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pregnancy; people aged 65 years or over, and people aged six months or over who have medical conditions that mean they have a [higher risk of getting serious disease](#).

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