

Influenza (Flu) Vaccine for Children

Information about the free vaccine program for children aged 6 months to 4 years of age living in the Perth Metropolitan Area



What is influenza (Flu)?

Influenza, commonly called 'the flu' is a contagious respiratory viral illness that can cause serious illness, and even death in young children, older adults and certain vulnerable people of all ages. It is most common in winter months. It is not the same as the common cold.

How is influenza spread?

Influenza is spread through the air when someone with the disease coughs, sneezes or even talks. This releases droplets from the nose or throat that contain the influenza virus. The influenza virus can also be spread when someone touches something that has the virus on it, and then touches their nose, eyes or mouth.

What are the symptoms of influenza?

The symptoms include fever, headache, muscle aches, tiredness and weakness, congestion in the nose, throat and lungs. Children may have nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea. In more serious infections, complications can occur such as pneumonia, inflammation of the heart, and inflammation of the lungs and the illness may last longer. Healthy children under five years of age are more likely than adults to be hospitalized for complications from influenza.

About the Influenza vaccine:

Influenza vaccine protects against the influenza infection and the complications. The vaccine is needed every year because the influenza virus changes. **The vaccine is made of killed flu viruses and cannot give you the flu.** Influenza vaccine is given by injection. Two doses at least 1 month apart are recommended for children 9 years of age or younger receiving influenza vaccine for the first time. The vaccine is very effective even in young children if 2 doses are given.

Who can get free vaccine?

In the Perth metropolitan area children aged from 6 months to 4 years of age will be eligible for free influenza vaccine this year. Children born after 1 April 2003 are eligible. This vaccine will be available from April 2008. There may be a fee for the consultation with your general practitioner. For those children not eligible for funded vaccine, vaccine can be purchased on script from your doctor.

What are the possible side effects of the vaccine?

The majority of children who receive the vaccine (about 8 out of 10) will have no side effects. Of those children who have a side effect, most will have only a mild local reaction. Your GP will make sure it is safe for your child to receive the vaccine.

Your child's chance of being harmed by the flu is far greater than the chance of being harmed by the vaccine. Immunisation is one of the most important ways parents can protect their children against serious diseases.

Where can my child get the FREE influenza vaccine?

- At your local GP
- At the Central Immunisation Clinic, 16 Rheola Street, West Perth. Phone 9321 1312

Influenza is a serious disease in young children. Influenza vaccine is safe in children and will protect against the flu if children have 2 doses. Talk to your GP about your young child having a free flu vaccine this year before winter arrives.

