



Western Australia Paediatric Influenza Vaccination Program 2011 Information for Health Providers

The WA Paediatric Influenza Vaccination Program will continue in 2011.

Western Australia (WA) has offered free seasonal influenza vaccine to children aged over six months and under 5 years since 2008. In 2008 and 2009 nearly 60,000 doses of influenza vaccine were administered annually to children less than five years in WA and no safety issues were identified.

In 2010, influenza vaccination of children under five years of age was temporarily suspended due to febrile convulsions associated with one brand of influenza vaccine (CSL Fluvax).

The WA Paediatric Influenza Vaccination Program will proceed again in 2011, but CSL vaccine will not be used.

Why should you recommend influenza vaccination for young children?

The National Health and Medical Research Council, Australia's peak body for developing health advice for the community and health professionals, recommends annual vaccination for individuals six months of age or older who want to reduce their chances of becoming ill with influenza. This recommendation has not changed following the problems associated with the CSL brand of influenza vaccine last year.

Annual influenza vaccination is strongly recommended for individuals six months of age or older with a medical condition that places them at higher risk of severe influenza illness. Children with underlying medical conditions are eligible for free influenza vaccine through the National Immunisation Program.

Children without underlying medical conditions can also develop serious illness with influenza. Experience from Australia and overseas indicates that the majority of influenza-related paediatric hospitalisations and deaths occur among children without underlying medical conditions.

Over the last several months, four additional international studies have documented the benefits of vaccinating healthy young children against influenza.⁽¹⁻⁴⁾

What is different about the WA Paediatric Influenza Vaccination Program in 2011?

There are two major differences:

- First, the WA Paediatric Influenza Vaccination Program will only be supplying Sanofi Pasteur influenza vaccine (Vaxigrip and Vaxigrip Junior) for use in healthy children under five years of age. Please note that Vaxigrip and the Abbott formulation, Influvac, will be available for children with underlying medical conditions eligible for funded vaccine under the National Immunisation Program. CSL Fluvax is not currently registered for use in children less than five years of age and should not be used in this group.

- Second, CDCD will be encouraging all providers to use the vaccine information sheet entitled “Influenza Vaccine and Children: what WA parents need to know, 2011” when discussing the risk and benefits of vaccinating children against influenza. Use of this information sheet is not mandatory, but should be a valuable aid to ensuring an optimal informed consent experience for parents.

What about influenza vaccine and febrile convulsions in children?

The Therapeutic Goods Administration states “febrile convulsions after influenza vaccination can occur although this is an uncommon event. Parents should be made aware of the possibility and the child should be monitored for fever. Paracetamol and physical methods can be used to reduce fever.”

Experience from North America, where young children have been vaccinated routinely since 2003, indicates that febrile convulsions after influenza vaccination are rare, estimated to be approximately three febrile convulsions per one hundred thousand vaccine doses given to children.

By comparison, influenza infection is a major cause of febrile convulsions in young children. In a recent study from Europe, influenza infection accounted for 10% of all hospitalisations among children during flu season and one in five of the children admitted with flu had a febrile convulsion.

Key points to remember about influenza vaccine dosing in children:

- Children six months to less than three years of age should be given 0.25 ml of influenza vaccine; if you do not have a 0.25 ml dose you may use half of a 0.5 ml dose.
- All individuals aged three years or older should be given the full 0.5 ml of seasonal influenza vaccine.
- Children nine years old or younger who have received less than two doses of seasonal influenza vaccine ever in their lives should receive two doses of seasonal vaccine this year with the doses given at least one month apart. The amount of each dose should be that recommended for their age, as noted above.
- Providers should ensure that all vaccinations (including influenza vaccination) administered to children aged less than seven years are recorded in the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register. Please note that you are NOT required to send line listings of children vaccinated through the WA Paediatric Influenza Vaccination Program to CDCD.

The safety of influenza vaccine in children - both those with and without high-risk medical conditions – will be closely monitored using a combination of ongoing passive reporting via the Western Australia Vaccine Safety Surveillance (WAVSS) system and active follow-up on a subset of children. If a patient has symptoms you think may be a reaction to a vaccine, you should report the reaction through the Western Australia Vaccine Safety Surveillance (WAVSS) system:

www.wavss.health.wa.gov.au.

Alternatively, you can report the reaction by calling the Central Immunisation Clinic on (08) 9321 1312 (8.30 am – 4.30 pm)

For further information on influenza and influenza vaccination, consult the Australian Immunisation Handbook, 9th Edition, 2008 (chapter 3.9, Influenza), Consumer Medicine Information for influenza vaccines at <https://www.ebs.tga.gov.au/>, or the WA Department of Health immunisation website at www.public.health.wa.gov.au

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2. Katayose M, Hosoya M, Haneda T, Yamaguchi H, Kawasaki Y, Sato M, Wright PF. The effectiveness of trivalent inactivated influenza vaccine in children over six consecutive influenza seasons. *Vaccine*. 2011 Feb 17; 29(9):1844-9. Epub 2010 Dec 31.
3. Cohen SA, Chui KK, Naumova EN. Influenza vaccination in young children reduces influenza-associated hospitalizations in older adults, 2002-2006. *J Am Geriatr Soc*. 2011 Feb; 59(2):327-32.
4. Sakkou Z, Stripeli F, Papadopoulos NG, Critselis E, Georgiou V, Mavrikou M, Drossatou P, Constantopoulos A, Kafetzis D, Tsofia M. Impact of influenza infection on children's hospital admissions during two seasons in Athens, Greece. *Vaccine*. 2011 Feb 1; 29(6):1167-72. Epub 2010 Dec 18.