

# FLU VIRUS & VACCINATION FAQs



- **What is flu (influenza)?**

Flu (Influenza) is a common viral illness. In New Zealand, most cases occur during the winter, from May to October.

- **How do you get flu?**

Influenza (flu) spreads through the air when an infected person coughs, sneezes, talks, or laughs, releasing tiny droplets containing the virus, which can then be inhaled by people nearby. Or by touching a surface contaminated with the virus then touching their face.

- **What are the symptoms of flu?**

Influenza is not just a 'bad cold'. Although some of the symptoms are the same, influenza is usually much more severe, often has a sudden onset and can have much more serious consequences. Flu may include any or all of the following symptoms:

- Fever
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- Dry cough and/or sore throat
- Runny nose
- Vomiting and diarrhoea
- Lack of energy - this may be severe and last for two or more weeks

- **How long does the vaccine take to work?**

It takes up to 2 weeks after vaccination for the body to start protecting against flu.

- **How long will the flu shot last?**

The effectiveness of the flu vaccine declines over time. However, it provides protection for up to 6 months on average.

- **Do I need the flu shot if I have had the COVID-19 vaccine? Will the shots interfere with each other?**

The flu and COVID-19 are different diseases so you need both vaccines to be protected from each one. A flu shot provides a specific 'key' that unlocks a strengthened immune response to protect against influenza. The COVID-19 vaccine provides a different 'key' that also unlocks a strengthened immune response to protect against COVID-19. There is no master key that works for all viruses, so getting vaccinated against both infectious diseases will help keep you healthy. Getting the flu shot will not counteract the effects of the COVID-19 vaccine.

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- **Do I have to wait between getting the flu shot and the Covid-19 vaccine?**

No, they can be given on the same day. Studies show that co-administration of COVID-19 and influenza vaccines is safe and produces a good immune response.

- **I'm pregnant, is it safe for me to get the flu vaccine?**

Yes, the flu vaccine can be safely given at any stage of pregnancy.

- **What's in the 2025 flu vaccine?**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has announced recommendations for the strains contained in the 2025 Southern Hemisphere influenza vaccine. There is one change – to the Influenza A H3N2 strain. The other 3 strains in the quadrivalent vaccine remain the same.

The decision is based on surveillance to ensure the best possible match to the viruses expected to be circulating in the community.

WHO recommends the quadrivalent vaccines for 2025 should be based on the following strains:

## Egg-based vaccines

- an A/Victoria/4897/2022 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus;
- an A/Croatia/10136RV/2023 (H3N2)-like virus; and
- a B/Austria/1359417/2021 (B/Victoria lineage)-like virus.
- a B/Phuket/3073/2013 (B/Yamagata lineage)-like virus.

- **What type of vaccine is administered by LifeCare in 2025?**

At LifeCare we administer Afluria Quad. However, if you receive a LifeCare flu voucher from your employer, you may receive a different vaccine, such as Influxac® Tetra. You can also discuss with the pharmacist additional flu vaccination options.

- **Where can I find more information about flu and the influenza vaccination?**

The following NZ websites have reliable and credible information:

- [Home | fightflu.co.nz](https://fightflu.co.nz)
- [Te Whatu Ora Health New Zealand | Flu \(Influenza\)](https://www.health.govt.nz/our-services/flu-influenza)
- [Immunisation Advisory Centre | \(immune.org.nz\)](https://www.immune.org.nz)