

# 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 symptoms are similar, **influenza is usually much more severe**, often has a sudden onset, and can have 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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- **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 2026 flu vaccine?**

The World Health Organisation (**WHO**) has announced the strains for the 2026 Southern Hemisphere influenza vaccine.

**WHO** recommends that trivalent vaccines for use in the 2026 southern hemisphere influenza season contain the following:

Egg-based vaccines:

- an A/Missouri/11/2025 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus;
- an A/Singapore/GP20238/2024 (H3N2)-like virus; and
- a B/Austria/1359417/2021 (B/Victoria lineage)-like virus.

Cell culture-, recombinant protein- or nucleic acid-based vaccines:

- an A/Missouri/11/2025 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus;
- an A/Sydney/1359/2024 (H3N2)-like virus; and
- a B/Austria/1359417/2021 (B/Victoria lineage)-like virus

- **What type of vaccine is administered by LifeCare in 2026?**

At **LifeCare**, we administer an egg-based influenza vaccine. In line with World Health Organisation (WHO) recommendations, this year's vaccine will be **trivalent**.

If you receive a **LifeCare flu voucher** from your employer, you can discuss with the pharmacist which vaccine type is covered by the voucher. Please note that alternative flu vaccine options may incur an additional cost, which would be payable by the voucher holder.

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

The following NZ websites have reliable and credible information:

- [Te Whatu Ora | 2026 Influenza Immunisation Programme](#)
- [Healthify | Common Questions About the Flu Vaccine](#)
- [Home | fightflu.co.nz](#)
- [Immunisation Advisory Centre | \(immune.org.nz\)](#)