

Media Release

The Hon Mary-Anne Thomas MP

Leader of the House

Minister for Health

Minister for Health Infrastructure

Minister for Medical Research



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GET VACCINATED TO STAY WELL THIS WINTER

Victorians are being urged to protect themselves and their loved ones this winter by getting their influenza vaccination, ahead of an expected spike in flu and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) cases during winter.

Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas today visited the Royal Children's Hospital's Immunisation Clinic to encourage all Victorians to get vaccinated, with alarming data showing only one in ten children were vaccinated against the flu as of late April.

The new data also revealed that one third of parents were not aware that flu can cause serious illness in otherwise healthy children.

Flu is highly contagious, and while it can be mild in some people, it can also cause severe illness, hospitalisation, and death in otherwise healthy people.

Following a resurgence in 2022, seasonal flu activity is expected to continue to rise in 2023 – and the last fortnight has seen an increase in notified flu cases, with of cases in children aged from 5-14 increasing by 115 per cent – highlighting just how important vaccination is for children.

Flu vaccination is recommended for anyone six months and older and is free under the National Immunisation Program for people considered to be at higher risk.

This includes children aged six months to under five years, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged six months of age and older, pregnant women, people aged 65 and over, and people with medical conditions that put them at increased risk of severe flu and its complications.

All Victorians can receive their vaccination through a local provider – including your GP, pharmacy, local council immunisation clinic, Aboriginal Health Service or community health centre.

Cases of RSV are also on the rise, especially among younger children – around half of RSV cases within the past fortnight were aged under 3 years.

While there is currently no vaccine available against RSV, there are other simple steps people can all follow to stay well and stop the spread of respiratory illnesses, including washing or sanitising hands often, coughing or sneezing into your elbow, wearing a mask, and staying home when sick.

No interval is required between the flu and COVID-19 vaccinations, as they target different viruses and with booster vaccines now available that target emerging variants, you can receive both vaccines on the same day.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Health Mary-Anne Thomas

“While flu can be mild in some people, in others it can cause a very serious illness – so protect yourself and your loved ones by rolling up your arm for your flu vaccination.”

“Children are at a much higher risk of serious illness due to flu, and with so few vaccinated I want to encourage all parents to protect your children this winter.”

“Stay well this winter - get vaccinated against flu and COVID, and stay at home if you're sick.”

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