

Let's protect what matters

Communicable Diseases Branch

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Queensland clinicians

Acute respiratory infections

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Stop the spread of respiratory illnesses

Clinicians can help reduce the spread of acute respiratory infections (ARIs) by sharing these simple vaccination and hygiene messages with staff and patients.

Get vaccinated

- Vaccination is the best way to prevent severe illness, complications and hospitalisation from ARIs.
- A recommendation from a healthcare provider positively influences whether someone gets vaccinated.
- Getting a flu vaccine before the peak season offers the best protection, however vaccination still helps if given later in the season.
- Influenza (flu), COVID-19 and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) vaccines are available through GPs, pharmacies and other immunisation service providers. Details on recommended vaccines are outlined on page 2.

Practice good hygiene

- Cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or the inside of your elbow.
- Throw used tissues into a bin straight away.
- Clean hands thoroughly and regularly with soap and water or hand sanitiser.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces such as door handles, taps, tables, remote controls, phones, laptops, benchtops and fridge doors. Clean your hands after cleaning.
- Improve air flow by opening windows or increasing ventilation where possible.

Stay at home when unwell

- Remind patients and staff to stay home when unwell to prevent spreading illness.

Infection prevention and control in general practice and primary care

- Implement screening and triage for people with signs or symptoms of ARI.
- Display signage reminding patients about ARI prevention.
- Separate symptomatic patients (for example, designated respiratory clinic times) and provide masks.
- Use outdoor consultations, telehealth or home visits where appropriate.
- Coordinate appointments for vulnerable patients so they can see multiple clinicians in one visit during quieter periods.
- Check ventilation systems are working properly. Consider air purifiers and advice from a heating, ventilation and air-conditioning specialist.
- Ensure staff have appropriate PPE, especially reception and triage staff.
- Consider protective screens for reception counters, floor signage ("stand here"), barriers and other environmental controls to protect staff.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that are touched frequently and implement cleaning protocols.
- Clean shared equipment (including toys) between patients.

ARIs, including flu, COVID-19 and RSV, can significantly disrupt communities and healthcare systems during winter. Severe illness can affect people of all ages, including healthy children and adults. Vaccination helps reduce the spread of ARIs and the severity of illness.

Clinicians should discuss the benefits of vaccination to staff and patients to protect the community and reduce pressure on healthcare services. Encourage patients with ARI symptoms to stay home while unwell and not attend work, school or childcare. Parents and staff should follow school or childcare exclusion rules for children who are unwell or have medical conditions. **Let's protect what matters!**

Key vaccine information

Influenza

- The [Free Flu Vaccination Program](#) is available now for Queensland residents aged 6 months and over, until 30 September 2026.
- The [Free Nasal Flu Spray Immunisation Program](#) offers a needle-free nasal spray flu vaccine for children aged 2 to 5 years (before they turn 6). The nasal spray flu vaccine brand is FluMist®, which has been used to vaccinate millions of children in the Northern Hemisphere (including the UK and USA) over the last decade.
- Funded injectable flu vaccine is also available year-round for eligible Queensland residents under the National Immunisation Program.
- Priority groups for flu vaccination:
 - All children aged 6 months to 5 years
 - All adults aged 65 years and over
 - People aged 5 to 65 years at higher risk of severe illness:
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
 - People with medical risk factors
 - During pregnancy.

Refer to the [Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation Clinical Advice for 2026](#).

RSV

- The Queensland Paediatric RSV Prevention Program provides free RSV vaccination:
 - During pregnancy at 28 to 36 weeks gestation
 - For eligible infants and young children under 2 years
- RSV vaccination is also recommended, but not funded, for:
 - People aged 75 years and over
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 60 years and over
 - People aged 50 years and older with medical risk factors.

Refer to the [Australian Immunisation Handbook](#) and the [Queensland Paediatric Respiratory Syncytial Virus Prevention Program](#) for more information.

COVID-19

- COVID-19 vaccination remains vital in protecting people at higher risk of severe illness. COVID-19 vaccines are free for all eligible individuals.
- A free COVID-19 primary course is recommended for:
 - People aged 18 years and older
 - Children aged 6 months to 18 years with medical risk factors.
- Booster doses every 6 or 12 months are recommended based on a person's age and risk of severe illness.

Refer to the [Australian Immunisation Handbook](#) and the [Australian Government's COVID-19 vaccine advice](#) for more information.

Surveillance

Weekly reports on flu, RSV and COVID-19 cases are available on [Queensland Health's ARI surveillance webpage](#).

Resources

Queensland Health has developed a collection of [consumer resources you can download](#) and share in your workplace. More resources will be added over the coming weeks.

You can access further clinical advice through the following webpages:

- [ATAGI clinical advice for flu vaccine providers](#)
- [ATAGI clinical guidance for COVID-19 vaccine providers](#)
- [Australian Department of Health advice for RSV vaccine providers](#)
- [Australian Immunisation Handbook](#)
- [Queensland Health advice on the flu](#)
- [Queensland Health advice on COVID-19](#)
- [Queensland Health advice on RSV](#)
- [Contact Details for public health units](#)