

Australian Medical Association Limited
ABN 37 008 426 793

42 Macquarie Street, Barton ACT 2600: PO Box 6090, Kingston ACT 2604
 Telephone: (02) 6270 5400 Facsimile (02) 6270 5499
 Website : <http://www.ama.com.au/>



AMA RECOMMENDS EARLY FLU VACCINATION FOR GREATER PROTECTION DURING COVID-19 CRISIS

AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, today reiterated the AMA recommendation that people should get their seasonal flu vaccination somewhat earlier this year to help provide greater individual and community health protection throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Dr Bartone said that the flu vaccine is currently being delivered to general practices across Australia throughout April, ready for the winter flu season.

“Unfortunately, and disappointingly, supply of the vaccine to GPs has so far not flowed smoothly or consistently, but the Government is actively responding to the AMA’s call to improve distribution to ensure that adequate supply is in place before the optimal time to receive the vaccine, which is late April and early May,” Dr Bartone said.

“Getting the flu vaccine early will help alleviate pressure on the health system. With many of our health resources focused on saving lives and treating those with COVID-19, we need to reduce the number of presentations for influenza.

“We also need to provide greater protections for vulnerable people to minimise the possibility that they could contract both influenza and COVID-19.”

Dr Bartone said the best and safest place to get the flu vaccine is from your GP at your local general practice.

“As a result of AMA advocacy, vaccine deliveries are now being fast tracked across the country. There will be enough flu vaccine for everyone who needs it,” Dr Bartone said.

“However, it is important for people to plan their visit to the GP, be patient, and follow the advice provided by the general practice to ensure everybody is vaccinated in a timely manner.

“GPs can administer a National Immunisation Program (NIP) funded free vaccine in every State and Territory, which applies to many millions of Australians.

“In particular, the vaccine that is recommended for people over 65 is free and only supplied through the NIP. There is no need to pay for an inappropriate vaccine in this age group.

“Your local general practice provides a safe, appropriately infection-controlled environment, especially in these days of social distancing, to minimise any possible risk of being exposed to COVID-19.

“Your GP knows your medical history and can provide holistic care, and the general practice is properly resourced and skilled to deal with any rare instances of reactions to the vaccine.

“It is important to call your GP to book your appointment for your flu shot and advise the clinic of any health issues, including fever, coughing, sneezing, sore throat, or aches and pains.

“General practices are now receiving sufficient stocks of personal protection equipment (PPE), and some practices are offering drive-through facilities to provide even safer conditions for vaccinations.

“Seeing your GP for the flu vaccination is also an opportunity to discuss your overall health needs, which is very important during this period of COVID-19 enforced isolation.

“Many people are experiencing physical and mental health stresses at the moment. GPs are best placed to assist people to manage all their health needs and the needs of their families in these difficult times,” Dr Bartone said.

17 April 2020

CONTACT: John Flannery 02 6270 5477 / 0419 494 761
 Maria Hawthorne 02 6270 5478 / 0427 209 753

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