



“Flu” season 2016

Immunisation against influenza has begun for the 2016 season. Fluarix and Influvac remain the two subsidised influenza vaccines in 2016. The vaccines contain two new strains and retain one strain that was a component of the 2015 vaccine:¹

- A/Hong Kong/4801/2014 H3N2-like virus (new)
- B/Brisbane/60/2008-like virus (new)
- A/California/7/2009 H1N1-like virus

There has been no change in the subsidy groups for 2016. Influenza vaccination is encouraged and subsidised if administered prior to 31 July 2016, for:

- Pregnant women at any time during pregnancy
- People aged 65 years or older
- People aged six months to 65 years who are at increased risk of influenza complications because of a medical condition, e.g. significant respiratory illness, cerebrovascular disease, chronic heart problems, diabetes, cancer (excluding non-invasive basal and squamous skin cancers), chronic kidney disease, conditions or treatment that compromise normal immune function
- Children aged four years and under who have been hospitalised for, or have a history of, significant respiratory illness

 The full list of conditions that qualify a patient for subsidised vaccination is available from www.influenza.org.nz/eligibility-criteria or www.pharmac.govt.nz/Schedule?osq=influenza

The dosing schedule for influenza vaccination also remains the same as in previous years:

- Two doses, given four weeks apart, for children aged six months to eight years who have not been previously vaccinated against influenza
- One dose for people over nine years of age, and children aged six months to eight years who have previously received an influenza vaccination.

All health-care providers and non-clinical practice staff should receive an influenza vaccination. Vaccination is also recommended, but not subsidised for individuals and family members who are in regular and close contact with immunocompromised people, and children or elderly people who are at high risk of complications from influenza.¹

A new indicator for pregnant women (“Flu-pregnant”) has been added to the National Immunisation Register (NIR) and PMS systems to enable accurate data collection and claiming. Additionally, some pharmacies this year are testing an access portal into the NIR that will allow vaccines given in pharmacies to be recorded.

Reference:

1. Immunisation Advisory Centre (IMAC). Everything Healthcare Professionals need to know about the 2016 Influenza Season. Available from: www.influenza.org.nz/ (Accessed Apr, 2016)