There was exceptionally high demand for influenza vaccine early in the 2018 Influenza Program. This, alongside complex immunisation programs and some late changes to the programs, impacted upon vaccine availability in Australia during 2018. To help manage some of these factors, and to assist providers with program implementation, the Immunisation Section has summarised some key points for the 2019 program.

**Timing of vaccination**

Annual vaccination before the onset of the influenza season is recommended.

The period of peak influenza virus circulation is typically June to September for most parts of Australia.

While protection after vaccination is generally expected to last for the whole season, optimal protection against influenza occurs within the first 3 to 4 months following vaccination.

Revaccination later in the same season is not routinely recommended for individuals who have already received a 2019 influenza vaccine.

Vaccination should continue to be offered as long as influenza viruses are circulating and vaccine is available.

**Vaccines**

The composition of flu vaccines for the Southern Hemisphere is reviewed in September each year by the World Health Organization, and then subsequently by the Australian Influenza Vaccine Committee.

**Trivalent influenza vaccines (TIV)** contain viruses for two influenza A subtypes and one influenza B lineage and are for use in those aged 65 years of age and older.

**Quadrivalent vaccines (QIV)** contain viruses for both influenza A subtypes and two influenza B lineages.

Age specific quadrivalent influenza vaccines are available for people under 65 years of age. Providers must ensure they administer the age appropriate vaccine under the relevant NIP or State funded program.

Refer to the 2019 South Australian Annual Funded Influenza Program Schedule for the vaccines available in SA and the eligible age cohorts.
Nationally funded program (NIP)

**Pregnant women**
Vaccination during pregnancy decreases the risk of influenza in the woman and the newborn.

Influenza vaccine can be given at any stage of the pregnancy.

If a pregnant woman has received a 2018 influenza vaccine in this pregnancy, a 2019 vaccine should still be offered.

Only provide a pregnant woman with one vaccine for the 2019 season. There is no recommendation to re-vaccinate later in the same season.

Ensure that the flu vaccine is recorded on the woman’s antenatal card.

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people**
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people from 6 months of age are eligible to receive influenza vaccine.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children 6 months to under 9 years of age should have two doses at least 4 weeks apart in the first year they are vaccinated.

**People ≥65 years of age**
Fluad® vaccine (TIV) is the funded and recommended vaccine for all those aged ≥65 years.

Fluad is latex free.

Fluad has been designed to create a greater immune response than non adjuvanted vaccines in the elderly, who have a weaker immune response to vaccination.

There is no requirement or recommendation to give an additional QIV to people who have received a TIV.

**Medically at risk patients**
Flu vaccine is funded under the NIP for those from 6 months of age with medical risk factors such as severe asthma, lung or heart disease, low immunity or diabetes.
South Australian state government funded program

Children 6 months to less than 5 years who are not covered under the NIP

State funded influenza vaccine is available for children aged 6 months to less than 5 years who are not eligible under the NIP. Fluarix®Tetra is the vaccine made available through this program. The Fluarix®Tetra vaccine dose is **0.5ml** for all ages from 6 months.

Note: Children aged 6 months to less than 9 years receiving influenza vaccine for the first time require 2 doses at least 4 weeks apart, with only one dose being required thereafter for those who have received at least one influenza vaccine in a previous flu season.

Key points for use of age specific vaccines

The 5 different vaccines, the different age recommendations for use and the various cohorts eligible for vaccines create the potential for program errors to occur.

It is important providers are aware of the dosing differences and the age cohorts for all vaccines.

These are some key points to consider/remember:

- The NIP provides these childhood vaccines:
  - FluQuadri® Junior **0.25ml** for children 6 months to less than 3 years
  - Fluarix®Tetra **0.5ml** for those aged 6 months and older.
  - Afluria®Quad 0.5ml for those aged **5 years** and older
- The South Australian Childhood Influenza Program provides Fluarix®Tetra **0.5ml** for children 6 months to less than 5 years.
- The NIP provides Fluad® to be given only to those **65 years and older**.

**Label vaccine stock** to minimize the risk of inappropriate administration to an incorrect age-group.

Vaccine availability and ordering

Check the Vaccine Distribution Centre noticeboard frequently for information regarding online flu vaccine orders.

[https://sa.tollhealthcare.com/](https://sa.tollhealthcare.com/)

Please note there are several public holidays occurring during the early period of program implementation that will affect vaccine order cut off and delivery dates.
Providers must consider the following when placing vaccine orders:

- **Only hold enough vaccines to maintain stock levels until the next delivery two weeks later.**

- **Calculate how many vaccinations your service can provide each day.**
  For example: one dedicated nurse immuniser can vaccinate approximately 50 patients per day, if your practice will have one dedicated nurse vaccinating 5 days/week, order 500 vaccines for a fortnight (initially).

- **Consider your patient age cohort and eligibility.**
  For example: how many patients does your practice have that are aged 65 years and over, children aged 6 months to less than 5 years, (including those that are medically at risk), Aboriginal people aged 6 months and over, pregnant women, and medically at risk individuals?

- **Check your vaccine storage space.**
  You may need to source an additional purpose built vaccine specific fridge for additional storage space, to maintain adequate vaccine stock levels during the flu program or, you may need to order less stock if your fridge is not large enough to meet the needs of you calculated patient cohort size. Check with the manufacturer about your fridge’s vaccine storage capacity.

**Program resources**

- South Australian Annual Funded Influenza Program Schedule- 2019
- The Australian Immunisation Handbook – [Influenza chapter](#)
- Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) - Advice on seasonal influenza vaccines in 2019
- [National Immunisation Research and Surveillance Centre](#)

This resource has been adapted from the New South Wales Health *Influenza Vaccination Toolkit-2019*.

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**For more information**

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