

Event	Effective immediately: Expanded flu vaccine eligibility for children aged 6 months to under 5 years
Notified by	Clinical Teams, Protection and Prevention, NPHS
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To	Chief Medical Officers, Hospital Specialists, NPHS national and regional services, Office of the Director of Public Health (Manatū Hauora), Primary Care, Prevention Immunisations, Pharmacy, NZMN, Laboratory Services, NZ College of Midwives, Occupational Health, IPC

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Summary

Due to high rates of influenza-related presentations in primary care and hospitalisations among young children, funded influenza vaccination eligibility has been expanded to include all children aged 6 months to under 5 years of age effective from 01 September 2026.

The decision supports an urgent public health response to help reduce the burden of flu disease in young children and alleviate system pressures. It is enabled by work already underway for the planned 2027 influenza programme changes, and confirmation of sufficient vaccine supply.

The New Zealand flu season started late and may go on longer than usual—it’s not too late for people to get vaccinated. The predominant virus is influenza A subclade K; the flu vaccine is a good match to currently circulating flu viruses.

Key messages for healthcare professionals

- From 01 September 2026, all children aged from 6 months to under 5 years will be eligible for funded influenza vaccination.
- General Practice recommended to recall all eligible children for influenza immunisation.
- Continue to prioritise routine childhood immunisations.
- Co-administer influenza vaccine with scheduled vaccines where appropriate.
- Children aged from 6 months to under 4 years receiving influenza vaccine for the first time require two doses, at least four weeks apart. Children aged from 4 years only require one dose unless they are immunocompromised.
- Use this opportunity to check immunisation status and offer any overdue immunisations.
- Continue to promote influenza vaccination and encourage all those eligible for funded flu vaccine who haven’t received a vaccine to get vaccinated without delay.

Key actions for healthcare professionals

Recall actions for general practice

- Recall all children in your practice aged from 6 months to under 5 years.
 - Prioritise follow up of children at increased risk of severe influenza, including, children already eligible for funded influenza vaccination due to underlying medical conditions including those with a history of respiratory-related hospitalisation.
- Consider running additional clinics or extending hours.
- Consider using the recall message below to contact eligible whānau and caregivers.

Message: Protect your child from flu. Flu is making many young children sick this year. The good news is the flu vaccine is now **free** for all children aged from 6 months to under 5 years. Book your appointment today.

Outreach Immunisation Services (OIS)

- Please do not refer children to OIS for flu vaccines.
- OIS may offer influenza vaccine opportunistically where there is capacity to do this.

Other actions

- Proactively offer influenza vaccination during all eligible healthcare encounters. Where appropriate, encourage vaccination among eligible wider whānau, including:
 - pregnant women
 - those aged under 65 years with eligible conditions
 - those aged 65 years and over.
- Continue sharing public health guidance available via [HealthEd](#) on measures to reduce the spread of winter illnesses:
 - hand hygiene and wearing masks
 - cover coughs and sneezes
 - stay at home if unwell.

Further information

- **Immunisation subsidy claims:** general practice and community pharmacy providers may submit claims using the indication code '2' *Under 18 years, eligible condition – flu (influenza)*, or '3' *eligible condition*. For further detail on influenza administration and co-administration payments, refer to the:
 - Primary Health Organisation Service Agreement (PHOSA)
 - Integrated Community Pharmacy Service Agreement (ICPSA).
- **Recording in AIR:** select the indication code 'Influenza, eligible under 18 years'.

References/sources of information and resources

- [Pharmac – 2026 flu season](#)
- [PHF Science – Respiratory illness dashboard](#)
- [Immunisation Handbook – Chapter 11. Influenza](#)
- [Immunisation Advisory Centre - 2026 Winter Preparedness Kit \(formerly Flu Kit\)](#)
- [HealthPathways](#)
- [Suggested Dropbox resources](#) [Note: **new** material to be added shortly]
 - NIP9287 Flu 2026 – Tamariki healthcare providers – A5 flyer
 - NIP8919 Flu 2026 – Tamariki – A3 poster
- [HealthEd: HE1365 - Winter Wellness for communities](#)

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