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FLU VACCINATION PROGRAM

As the flu season approaches it is essential that staff and volunteers book in for the flu (influenza) vaccine. Each year the flu strain changes, so a modified vaccine is required. It is important to note that the COVID-19 vaccination does not protect you against the flu.

The COVID-19 lockdowns and social distancing measures in 2020 and 2021 caused influenza case numbers to hit record lows and as a result, natural immunity for influenza reduced. With lowered immunity and vaccine rates (around 35% of Australians got the flu vaccine in 2021), we can expect this flu season to strike more aggressively, and vaccination is the best way to protect yourself and those around you.

The National Immunisation Program provides a free flu shot for:

- anyone over the age of 6 months with a chronic illness
- all children between the ages of 6 months and 5 years
- all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people over the age of 6 months
- people over the age of 65
- pregnant women (during any stage of pregnancy)

DFES staff and volunteers (and their immediate family members who live in the same household) who do not fit the above categories are able to seek reimbursement from DFES towards the cost of vaccination.

How to claim your reimbursement

Staff

A flu vaccination reimbursement of \$20 is available for all DFES staff and immediate family members residing at the same household who receive the vaccine before 30 June 2022. Please complete the [reimbursement form](#) and forward an electronic copy with evidence of your receipt to DFES Payroll to receive the reimbursement in your pay.

Volunteers

Volunteers that receive a vaccination before 30 June 2022 will also be able to seek a reimbursement of \$20 through their Brigade, Group or Unit (BGU). A copy of your receipt will need to be sent to your BGU so that a collective [immunisation expense reimbursement form](#) can be submitted to your DFES Manager.

Note – DFES is unable to reimburse for doctor or nurse consultation fees and submissions for reimbursements will only be accepted up until the 31 August 2022. [Click here](#) to find a provider near you.

Co-administration with COVID-19 vaccines

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) has stated that influenza and COVID-19 vaccines and boosters can be co-administered. COVID-19 and influenza vaccinations should be received as soon as they become available.

Protect yourself again Influenza

To help prevent the spread of influenza, follow these tips:

- cover coughs and sneezes with your inner elbow
- wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds with soap and water
- use hand sanitiser with at least 60% alcohol often
- clean high contact surfaces such as doorknobs and phones frequently

Feeling Unwell

If you have the flu, you can be infectious from 24 hours before symptoms start until 1 week after they cease. Typically, with mild flu you will recover on your own without any treatment. You should stay home if you are feeling unwell and keep hydrated. Medical attention should be sought for severe symptoms including breathing difficulty, chest pain, dizziness, confusion, fever and vomiting.

Note – As flu symptoms can be similar to COVID-19, talk to your doctor about testing for COVID-19 infection. Call ahead before any appointments to make sure there's no one in an at-risk group around when you attend.

Addition information can be accessed from the following links:

<https://www.health.gov.au/health-topics/immunisation/about-immunisation>
<https://www.health.gov.au/news/2022-influenza-vaccination-early-advice-for-vaccination-providers>
<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/atagi-advice-on-seasonal-influenza-vaccines-in-2022>

If you have questions relating to the DFES flu vaccination program, please contact Manager Mental Health and Wellbeing Mitchell Sewell on (08) 9395 9579 or via email at Mitchell.Sewell@dfes.wa.gov.au

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