



# Influenza (the flu)

## Information Sheet

Recent news articles have reported a later start to the flu season in New Zealand. The strain of flu circulating around New Zealand at present is predominantly Influenza A (H3N2) and Influenza B/Victoria. These strains are covered in the flu vaccine.

Symptoms of influenza come on suddenly and can include fever, chills, muscle aches, runny nose, cough, sore throat and stomach upsets.

The flu spreads quickly from person to person through touch and through the air. It can be a serious disease and can cause serious complications in some people.

Immunisation gives you the best chance of being protected. It is free from a GP or nurse for New Zealanders at high risk of complications – children aged 4 years or under who has been hospitalised for a respiratory illness, pregnant women, people aged 65 and over, and anyone under 65 years of age, including children six months and older, with long-term health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease, cancer, a serious medical condition or who regularly use an asthma preventer.

If you do not have one of these eligible conditions, you still benefit from an influenza immunisation, available at a small cost.

### Preventing the spread of flu

Anyone who feels unwell with flu symptoms should:

- stay away from work, school or ECE until free of major symptoms for 48 hours
- wash their hands regularly (20 seconds with soap and water and 20 seconds drying)
- cover their mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing and dispose of the tissue in a lined bin and wash and dry hands
- avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth
- not share drinks and food
- avoid crowded places
- stay away from sick/immune-compromised people.

For further information on flu go to [www.fightflu.co.nz](http://www.fightflu.co.nz) or [www.health.govt.nz/influenza](http://www.health.govt.nz/influenza) or call 0800 IMMUNE 0800 466 863.

**or please contact:**

MidCentral Public Health Service  
Palmerston North: (06) 350 9110  
Whanganui: (06) 348 1775

