

Flu update for healthcare workers

This year, in the context of the borders reopening and the continued threat of COVID-19, the goal is to have 80% of healthcare workers to be vaccinated against influenza. DHB staff vaccination rates are not at that level yet. The following information may be used to increase uptake in your DHB.

This influenza season is different from others

- This year New Zealand and Australia are having a significant influenza season.
- Usually, our flu season follows a similar pattern to the Northern Hemisphere's. However, because many European countries were in lockdown during their winter, they didn't have a such a noticeable flu season.
- As a result, we don't know the full extent of this year's flu season. We can't predict how long it will last and we also don't know when it will peak.
- We do know that community immunity is likely to be lower than usual because New Zealand has had very few influenza infections for the past two years.
- And, with both influenza and COVID-19 circulating in the community, the risk of co-infection is high.
- We don't have a lot of validated data as influenza rates only started increasing in the last three weeks, but self-reported data (via flu tracking) and ESR surveillance data shows:
 - Where the [outbreak is most prevalent](#).
 - Influenza has become the [main respiratory illness causing hospitalisation](#).
 - Flu makes up three quarters of influenza-like illness in the community.

Call to action key messages

- Vaccines only work if you've had them before you need it, so please don't wait.
- We have good stocks of adult and paediatric doses.
- When the flu vaccine is working well, it can [reduce your risk of needing to see a doctor because of symptomatic influenza by 40-60%](#).
- Healthcare workers are positive role models for other parts of the community, so please lead by example.
- Even if you wear PPE and practice good infection prevention measures at work, you can still get the flu elsewhere. Influenza is circulating in the community, so you are at risk of getting it.
- It's quick and easy to get vaccinated. While people are welcome to wait 20 minutes after vaccination, if you're with others and understand the risks, you only need to wait five minutes¹ after your vaccination before going about your day.
- With both COVID and flu circulating it is important to use vaccination as a preventative tool to protect ourselves, our patients, our families, and our community.

¹ Page 6, [IMAC Flu Toolkit](#)

Funding flu vaccination for healthcare workers

DHB employees

There is an established process for DHBs to vaccinate staff against influenza, and the cost of this is factored into their existing budgets.

Non-DHB employees

To support health and disability workers not employed by DHBs, the Ministry of Health will reimburse employers the costs associated with vaccinating their patient- and client-facing employees. This offer includes those working in (but not limited to):

- General practice
- Private hospitals
- Disability services
- Pharmacies
- Aged residential care facilities
- Hauora Māori and Pacific health practices

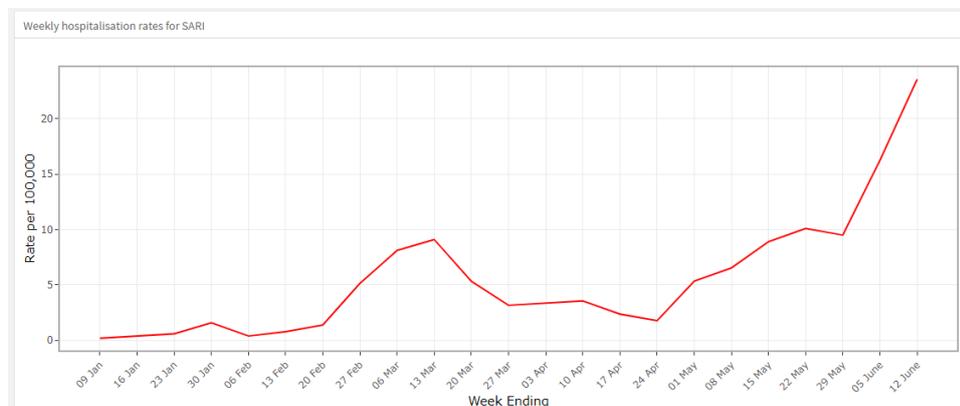
Seeking reimbursement

Applications for flu vaccination reimbursement will be processed between 1 May 2022 and 30 September 2022. Guidance on applying for a reimbursement can be found here:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/influenza#reimbursement>

Supporting data

ESR data shows that in the past two weeks influenza has taken over as the main respiratory illness causing hospitalisation of patients.



Flu makes up three quarters of influenza-like illness in the community.

Sentinel Surveillance Virology

