

Preparing for winter 2025

Information for aged care providers

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The 2025 winter season is approaching, with respiratory illness activity expected to rise in the coming months. Influenza (flu), COVID-19 and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), are common respiratory illnesses that typically increase in winter.

Adults aged 65 and over are at greater risk of complications from respiratory infections, such as chest infections and heart conditions, which may require hospitalisation. Vaccination is the best way to reduce the risk of serious illness, hospitalisation or death from these infections.

Preparing for the winter season

Become familiar with respiratory resources

Review the [NSW Respiratory Surveillance Report](#)¹ every Friday. This tells you if COVID-19, influenza and RSV are at low, moderate or high levels throughout NSW. Staff and visitors are recommended to wear masks in the facility when there are **moderate** or **high** levels of any of these respiratory viruses.

All aged care providers should ensure recommended vaccines and antivirals are available for residents. Staff should be up to date with their vaccinations and recommend vaccination to residents and their families where appropriate. Providers are required to implement an annual influenza vaccination program for their staff.

Residential aged care and home care providers are encouraged to review [Respiratory infection advice to residential aged care facilities \(RACFs\)](#)² or [Respiratory infection advice to home care service providers](#)³ for advice on vaccination, mask wearing and entry restrictions for residents, staff, and visitors.

Facilities should have preparedness plans in place to ensure a timely response to acute respiratory infections. Aged care providers should refer to the [Guidance for Residential Aged Care Facilities on Public Health Management of Acute Respiratory Infections](#)⁴ for advice on outbreak response protocols.

Get each resident's pre-assessment action plan ready

Remind all your residents' general practitioners to complete the below forms now so your residents can get access to antivirals as soon as they are diagnosed with COVID-19 or influenza:

- **For aged care facility residents:** [pre-assessment action plans for respiratory infections in aged care facility residents](#)⁵

¹ <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/reports.aspx>

² <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/racf-latest-advice.aspx>

³ <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/home-care-latest-advice.aspx>

⁴ <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Documents/racf-ari-guidance.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Documents/gp-antiviral-pre-assessment-form-aged-care.pdf>

- For people receiving home care: [Pre-assessment action plan for respiratory infections](#)⁶

Early treatment reduces the severity of disease and reduces spread among other residents and staff.

Ordering antiviral medicine for RACF residents

Influenza antiviral medicines

Facilities can order oseltamivir (Tamiflu®) directly from the State Vaccine Centre by completing the online [RACF influenza antiviral treatment access form](#)⁷. Facilities can order up to 250 doses of oseltamivir using this form. For orders above 250 doses, please contact your local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055.

COVID-19 antiviral medicines

COVID-19 antivirals (Paxlovid™ and Molnupiravir®) are available to people at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19, including people 70 years and older. Your resident's general practitioner needs to prescribe this medicine.

Please refer to [COVID-19 and influenza antiviral medicines](#)⁸ for more information on prescribing antiviral medicines. For other resources about antiviral medicines please see ([Guidance on use of antivirals in residential aged care facilities RACF](#))⁹.

Infection Prevention and Control (IPC)

Aged care providers and workers must implement infection prevention and control (IPC) measures and appoint an IPC Lead. An IPC Lead must be a registered or enrolled nurse who has completed, or is in the process of completing [specialist IPC training](#)¹⁰.

In-home care providers do not need to have an IPC Lead. However, providers are encouraged to appoint one or more workers to oversee your IPC program.

All staff are recommended to complete [IPC training](#)¹¹, including

- aged care workers
- kitchen, cleaning, and laundry workers
- volunteers
- administration and management workers.

Please see the [Aged Care Infection Prevention and Control Guide](#)¹² for guidance on responsibilities and requirements.

The Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care provides support to Australian Government-funded residential aged care services in managing COVID-19 outbreaks. For more information, see [Government support for providers and workers](#)¹³.

Vaccinations for residents should be recommended

NSW Health strongly recommends that residents of aged care facilities stay up to date with their vaccinations to protect them and the people around them from severe disease.

It is recommended that aged care providers collect and track information on resident and staff vaccination status ahead of the winter season.

⁶ <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Documents/gp-antiviral-pre-assessment-form-higher-risk.PDF>

⁷ <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/racf-antivirals-access.aspx>

⁸ <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/factsheets/Pages/racf-antiviral-treatments-and-prophylaxis.aspx>

⁹ <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Pages/racf-antivirals.aspx>

¹⁰ <https://www.health.gov.au/topics/aged-care/managing-respiratory-infection/infection-prevention-and-control-in-aged-care#ipc-lead-training-requirements>

¹¹ <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/our-work/infection-prevention-and-control/infection-prevention-and-control-aged-care>

¹² <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/publications-and-resources/resource-library/aged-care-infection-prevention-and-control-guide>

¹³ <https://www.health.gov.au/topics/aged-care/managing%20respiratory-infection%20government-support>

Residents are funded receive vaccines for [influenza](#)¹⁴ and [COVID-19](#)¹⁵ and pneumococcal disease according to the NSW schedule. RSV and pertussis can also cause severe disease in residents but these vaccines are not government funded.

Vaccine	Recommendation
NIP-funded recommended vaccines	
COVID-19[#]	Every 6 months - <i>Does not matter when last COVID-19 infection was</i>
Influenza[*]	Annually (recommended from mid-April to protect during peak season June–September)
Pneumococcal	Adults aged 70 years and over are recommended ¹⁶ a single dose a pneumococcal conjugate vaccine (Prevenar 13); plus additional doses of Pneumovax according to medical risk.
Privately purchased recommended vaccines	
RSV	Recommended ¹⁷ for ages 75 and over. Adults aged 60–74 years can consider RSV vaccination.
Pertussis (whooping cough)	Adults aged 65 years and over are recommended ¹⁸ a dose of dTpa if they have not had one in the past 10 years.

[#] COVID-19 vaccinations for RACFs are managed by the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care. More info: [COVID-19 vaccination information for residential aged care providers](#)¹⁹. While ATAGI recommends a COVID-19 vaccine every 12 months for those aged 64–75 years, this group is also eligible to have the vaccine every 6 months. In an aged care facility, vaccinating all residents aged 65 years and over every 6 months may be more practical.

^{*}Flu vaccines (FluAd Quad for 65+) can be ordered through the [State Vaccine Centre](#)²⁰. If you require assistance with accessing your State Vaccine Centre account, please contact the Vaccine Centre on 1300 656 132.

COVID-19, influenza, pneumococcal, pertussis (dTpa) and RSV vaccines can be administered at the same time. People may experience an increase in minor side effects such as redness/swelling at the site of vaccination or short-lived tiredness, muscle pains or mild fever when they are co-administered. However, the benefits of ensuring residents are protected from these diseases at the same time may outweigh such concerns and ensure higher uptake of these vaccines.

Facilities should ensure [compliance with vaccine storage and cold chain requirements](#)²¹. Vaccines are sensitive medicines that must be protected from light and stored within the temperature range of 2°C to 8°C at all times. Facilities should store vaccines in a purpose-built vaccine refrigerator at 2°C to 8°C in accordance with the [National Vaccine Storage Guideline 'Strive for 5'](#)²². Ensure all staff in the facility, including administrative staff, who are responsible for vaccine storage and cold chain management, successfully complete the [NSW Health Vaccine Storage and Cold Chain Management online learning module](#)²³. When a cold chain breach occurs, refer to the [NSW Cold Chain Breach Protocol](#)²⁴ and report the breach to your local Public Health Unit on 1300 066 055.

Providers should work with their general practitioners (GPs) and community pharmacists so residents can receive their vaccinations in the facility or home.

Home care service recipients and workers can get vaccinated at a GP clinic, participating pharmacy, or AMS. Visit [healthdirect.gov.au](#)²⁵ or call 1800 022 222 to find a nearby health services.

Vaccination bookings for home care clients and community members can be made through:

¹⁴<https://www.health.gov.au/topics/immunisation/vaccines/influenza-flu-vaccine>

¹⁵<https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/covid-19-vaccines/getting-your-vaccination>

¹⁶<https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au/recommendations/non-indigenous-adults-without-risk-conditions-for-pneumococcal-disease-are-recommended-to-receive-a-pneumococcal-conjugate-vaccine-at-70-years-of-age>

¹⁷<https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au/recommendations/adults-aged-75-years-are-recommended-to-receive-rsv-vaccine>

¹⁸<https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au/recommendations/adults-aged-65-years-are-recommended-to-receive-pertussis-containing-vaccine-if-their-last-dose-was-more-than-10-years-ago>

¹⁹<https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/covid-19-vaccines/information-for-aged-care-providers-workers-and-residents-about-covid-19-vaccines/residential-aged-care-residents>

²⁰<https://nsw.tollhealthcare.com/>

²¹<https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/covid-19-vaccines/information-for-aged-care-providers-workers-and-residents-about-covid-19-vaccines/residential-aged-care-residents>

²²<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/national-vaccine-storage-guidelines-strive-for-5>

²³ [NSW Health Vaccine Storage and Cold Chain Management online learning module](#)

²⁴<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/ccb-protocol.aspx>

²⁵<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/>

- [Healthdirect COVID-19 vaccinations](#)²⁶
- [Healthdirect flu vaccinations](#)²⁷

Consent requirements

Informed consent²⁸ is required (verbal or written) before administering any vaccine. Aged care providers are responsible for discussing, obtaining and recording consent from residents before vaccination.

Helpful resources include:

- [Australian Immunisation Handbook – Preparing for vaccination](#)²⁹
- [Consent for COVID-19 vaccination for older people, including aged care residents, families and carers](#)³⁰

A sample [online consent form](#)³¹ is available for families or residents to complete once for COVID-19, influenza, pneumococcal, and shingles vaccines. A [video guide](#)³² is also available.

NSW Health 2025 respiratory illness campaign key messages

Key messages for aged care staff, residents and family members this winter:

- Getting vaccinated this winter is the best way to protect yourself (and others) from serious illness from respiratory illnesses.
- Respiratory illnesses like COVID-19, Influenza (flu) and RSV are serious, especially for people aged 65 and over.
- Vaccinations are a normal part of staying well over winter.
- Protect yourself and others, so you don't miss a thing.
- Stay home if you're sick and wear a mask if you need to go out
- Avoid crowded spaces and get together in well-ventilated spaces.
- Make a plan with your doctor if you're at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 or influenza about what to do if you get sick, including what test to take, and discussing if you are eligible for antiviral medicine.
- Consider doing a rapid antigen test (RAT) (available for influenza, COVID-19 and RSV) before visiting those more vulnerable.
- Don't visit people who are at higher risk of severe illness if you are sick or have tested positive to COVID-19 or influenza
- Practice good general hygiene, like regular handwashing.

These messages can be shared to families, staff and your stakeholders as needed.

More information and resources

- [Influenza Vaccination Program 2025 – Immunisation Providers](#)³³
- [NSW Health 2025 Influenza Provider Toolkit](#)³⁴
- [Aged Care poster – help protect our residents](#)³⁵
- [SKAI for health professionals](#)³⁶ - to support your conversations with community members who have questions about vaccination

²⁶<https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/australian-health-services/guided-search/covid-vaccine>

²⁷<http://www.healthdirect.gov.au/nswflu vaccine>

²⁸<https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au/contents/vaccination-procedures/preparing-for-vaccination#valid-consent>

²⁹<https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au/contents/vaccination-procedures/preparing-for-vaccination#accordion-para-11276-189034>

³⁰<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/consent-for-covid-19-vaccination-for-older-people-including-aged-care-residents-families-and-carers?language=en>

³¹https://forms.office.com/Pages/ShareFormPage.aspx?id=v6eHptsC30O8u-eovaYRokFuCLtd9SNCrXj_sh3ucJBUN1oxQk9DNzk3Wk9FSDJDNkFIMUs5TU1QNi4u&sharetoken=1WWIXwvX1s1EHFAZ99Yo

³²<https://youtu.be/oGO57-aT6Fg?si=48qLcSX1WuOFDSsb>

³³<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/flu.aspx>

³⁴<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/immunisation/Pages/flu-provider-toolkit.aspx>

³⁵<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/covid-19/Publications/protect-residents.pdf>

³⁶<https://skai.org.au/healthcare-professionals?from=120>

- 2025 Respiratory Illness Campaign, including resources for the [general public](#)³⁷, [Aboriginal people](#)³⁸ and [culturally and linguistically diverse \(CALD\) communities](#)³⁹

For more information, see the [Respiratory illness: influenza \(flu\), COVID-19 and RSV webpage](#)⁴⁰. Printable campaign materials are also available for order through the [Better Health Centre](#)⁴¹.

The Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care has a [range of resources](#)⁴² to support aged care providers and workers understand their responsibilities and obligations to prepare for and prevent the spread of infectious respiratory diseases.

³⁷ <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/respiratory/Pages/resources.aspx>

³⁸ <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/infectious/respiratory/pages/aboriginal-resources.aspx>

³⁹ <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/respiratory/Pages/translations.aspx>

⁴⁰ <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/Infectious/respiratory/Pages/default.aspx>

⁴¹ [https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=v6eHptsC30O8u-](https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=v6eHptsC30O8u-eovaYRoqydWYd8EKBnhZz5OCNryg5UMUhRODNLSTRBQziXVjRIQ0ZFSlzRVM0Sy4u)

[eovaYRoqydWYd8EKBnhZz5OCNryg5UMUhRODNLSTRBQziXVjRIQ0ZFSlzRVM0Sy4u](https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=v6eHptsC30O8u-eovaYRoqydWYd8EKBnhZz5OCNryg5UMUhRODNLSTRBQziXVjRIQ0ZFSlzRVM0Sy4u)

⁴² <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/infectious-respiratory-disease-prepare-and-prevent>