

# General **Communique**

## Communicable Diseases Branch

Queensland Public Health and Scientific Services (QPHaSS)



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## Queensland Clinicians:

### Acute respiratory infections (ARI)

April 2025

#### Key messages for ARI prevention

**All Queenslanders have a role in ARI prevention:**

- **Stay protected** by getting your free vaccinations in 2025 for flu, RSV, and COVID-19, if eligible.
- **Stay at home** when you are sick (including keeping sick children home from school or childcare).
- **Clean your hands** regularly and thoroughly with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub.
- If you need to leave the house while unwell, **maintain physical distance** from others and **consider wearing a mask** when you cannot physically distance.
- **Practice good respiratory hygiene** by:
  - coughing or sneezing into a tissue or the inside of your elbow
  - discarding used tissues immediately in a bin, and
  - cleaning your hands thoroughly.
- **Clean frequently touched surfaces** such as door handles, tapware, tabletops, remote controls, mobile devices (e.g. phones, laptops etc.), benchtops and fridge doors and clean your hands after cleaning.
- **Ensure good ventilation** by opening windows and doors and spending time outside in the fresh air each day.

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## General practice & primary care infection prevention and control

- Implement screening and triage procedures for individuals presenting to clinics / health centres with ARI signs and symptoms.
- Post signage reminding patients of ARI prevention messages.
- Segregate symptomatic patients (consider designated respiratory clinic times to protect vulnerable patients) and provide masks for symptomatic patients, and source control.
- Utilise outdoor consultation/telehealth/home visit options where appropriate.
- Coordinate appointments for vulnerable patients to allow for multiple clinician consultations in one visit during lower activity times.
- Check the air handling in your facility is functioning efficiently, consider air purifiers and consulting a heating, ventilation, and cooling system specialist.
- Ensure adequate PPE for staff, especially reception and triage staff.
- Consider reception counter protective screens, floor signage (“stand here”), barriers and other environmental controls to protect your workforce.
- Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces frequently, implement cleaning protocols.
- Clean shared equipment (including toys) between patients.

## Vaccinate on time – be prepared for the ARI season

Acute respiratory infections (ARIs), including influenza (flu), respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and COVID-19 significantly disrupt communities and healthcare systems during winter. Severe illness can affect people of all ages, including healthy children and adults. Vaccination is a critical tool in reducing the spread and severity of ARIs.

Clinicians are encouraged to actively promote vaccination among their staff and patients to protect individuals and reduce pressure on healthcare services.

## Key Vaccination Information

### Influenza

- **Eligibility:** Influenza vaccine is free for all Queensland residents aged 6 months and older under the 2025 Queensland Free Flu Vaccination Program until 30 September 2025.
- **Priority Groups:**
  - First Nations people aged 6 months and over.
  - Children aged 6 months to under 5 years.
  - Pregnant individuals at any stage of pregnancy.
  - People aged 65 years or older.
  - Individuals with medical conditions that increase the risk of severe disease.
- **Co-administration:** Flu vaccine can be administered with most other vaccines at the same visit.
- **Resources:** Refer to the [Australian Immunisation Handbook](#) for detailed guidance.

## RSV

- The Queensland Paediatric Respiratory Syncytial Virus Prevention Program provides free RSV immunisation for:
  - Pregnant individuals at 28 to 36 weeks gestation
  - Eligible infants and young children in Queensland.
- **Resources:** Refer to the [Australian Immunisation Handbook](#) and the [Queensland Paediatric Respiratory Syncytial Virus Prevention Program](#) for detailed guidance.

## COVID-19

COVID-19 vaccination remains vital in protecting at-risk populations from severe COVID-19 outcomes. COVID-19 vaccines are free for all eligible individuals.

- **Eligibility:** Free COVID-19 primary course vaccination is recommended for:
  - All individuals aged 18 years or older
  - Children aged 6 months to under 18 years with medical conditions that increase their risk of severe disease.
- **Booster Doses:** Further doses every 6 or 12 months are recommended, or can be considered, based on an individual's age and risk factors for severe disease.
- **Resources:** Refer to the [Australian Immunisation Handbook](#) and the [Australian Government's COVID-19 vaccine advice](#) for detailed guidance.

## Surveillance

Weekly surveillance reports for influenza, RSV, and COVID-19 can be accessed at: [Acute respiratory infection surveillance reporting | Queensland Health](#).

## Resources for clinicians

- [AIVC Recommendations for the Composition of Influenza Vaccines for Australia in 2025 | Therapeutic Goods Administration \(TGA\)](#)
- [ATAGI clinical guidance for COVID-19 vaccine providers | Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care](#)
- [Queensland Health Notifiable Conditions Weekly Totals](#)
- [Influenza \(the flu\) | Communicable disease control guidance \(health.qld.gov.au\)](#)
- [Influenza \(the flu\) | Health and wellbeing | Queensland Government \(www.qld.gov.au\)](#)
- [COVID-19 | Communicable disease control guidance \(health.qld.gov.au\)](#)
- [COVID-19 | Health and wellbeing | Queensland Government \(www.qld.gov.au\)](#)
- [Respiratory syncytial virus \(RSV\) | Communicable disease control guidance \(health.qld.gov.au\)](#)
- [Respiratory syncytial virus \(RSV\) | Health and wellbeing | Queensland Government \(www.qld.gov.au\)](#)