

MEDIA RELEASE

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Get immunised now before winter influenza arrives

Influenza immunisation is now available and with potentially severe strains predicted for the coming season, people are urged to get immunised as soon as possible.

“Different viruses circulate every year and this year there could be some nasty ones, if we consider the particularly harsh flu season in the northern hemisphere,” says Toi Te Ora – Public Health, Medical Officer of Health, Dr Jim Miller.

Immunisation is free for people aged 65 and over, and anyone under 65 years of age with long term health conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, respiratory disease (including asthma), kidney disease and most cancers. The funded vaccine is available free from a doctor or nurse to eligible groups until June 30, 2009.

“Influenza is easily spread and anyone can catch it. It’s important for those most at risk to get immunised and do it before winter as it takes two weeks for immunisation to be effective,” says Dr Jim Miller.

He says it’s important to remember influenza is not the common cold but a potentially serious viral infection.

“Influenza can last for weeks and carries the risk of significant complications such as pneumonia,” he says. “While it might feel like you’re barely out of beachwear - it’s time to start thinking about giving yourself, family and friends the best protection against influenza this year.”

The influenza vaccine offers proven, effective immunity against the virus. It can’t give you influenza because it contains no live viruses. You can book an appointment with your doctor or nurse for immunisation today.

For more information go to www.influenza.org.nz or call 0800 IMMUNE (0800 466863)

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