

Acute Respiratory Infections (ARIs), including influenza, COVID-19 and RSV

Stakeholder communication content guide

May 2023



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Introduction

This stakeholder kit has been developed to assist in communicating important information about acute respiratory infections (ARIs) to Queenslanders.

ARIs encompass a range of infections caused by respiratory viruses, including, but not limited to Influenza, COVID-19, and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV). While these viruses can circulate all year round, there is typically an increase in infection rates during the cooler winter months. Practising good hygiene behaviours, such as cough etiquette, hand hygiene and staying home if unwell, can also help to reduce the likelihood of contracting and transmitting all ARIs.

An acute respiratory infection (ARI) is highly contagious and can spread very easily in the community. While most people recover from an ARI in about a week, for some it can lead to serious health problems, causing severe complications requiring hospitalisation and sometimes even death. Those with a mild illness may feel completely better within a week, while people who have extreme symptoms or side effects from the virus may take weeks or months to fully recover.

To help encourage uptake of the annual flu vaccine and COVID-19 vaccine, including boosters (if eligible) among Queenslanders and reduce transmission and case numbers of all ARIs, Queensland Health's Strategic Communications Branch has developed a suite of communications materials.

Key messages

General messages

- Respiratory viral infections such as the flu, COVID-19 and RSV are highly contagious and can circulate all year round.
- To reduce the spread of ARIs, including flu, COVID-19 and RSV, all Queenslanders are reminded to continue practising good hygiene and physical distancing.
 - Stay at home if you are sick and keep sick children at home. This will protect others.
 - Wash your hands regularly and thoroughly with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub.
 - Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your arm, consider wearing a mask, throw used tissues into the bin, and clean your hands afterwards.
 - When the risk of infection from ARIs is increased, choosing to wear a mask in crowded areas will lower your risk.
 - 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 taking plenty of fresh air outside each day.
 - Stay healthy by getting enough sleep, exercising regularly, drinking plenty of water, eating a well-balanced diet, and maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

- Keeping up to date with your vaccinations provides your best protection against flu and COVID-19 for you and your loved ones. All eligible people are encouraged to get vaccinated for flu and COVID-19 to protect themselves and those around them. Getting vaccinated is also part of keeping a healthy routine.
- You can't hide from flu, COVID-19, or RSV. These viruses are circulating in our community.

Messaging to focus on ARIs more broadly rather than singling out any individual respiratory infection. Use of the following specific flu, COVID-19 or RSV messaging will only be necessary if the messaging is needed to address any seasonal epidemiological trends.

Flu specific

- Flu is the most common vaccine-preventable disease in Australia. Although it can be a mild disease, flu can cause very serious illness in otherwise healthy people and can require hospitalisation and cause death.
- Flu is most often caused by type A or B influenza viruses that infect the upper airways and lungs.
- The flu remains a serious threat to children due to its potential to cause severe illness and complications. Many more people were infected with flu in 2022 due to an early start to the season, low levels of vaccination uptake and natural immunity. It is not possible to predict the severity of the upcoming season but being prepared by vaccinating children and the adults around them early can prevent severe disease and outbreaks in early childhood education centres and schools.
- Flu Symptoms usually appear 1 to 3 days after being infected and include fever, dry cough, muscle and joint pain, tiredness or extreme exhaustion, headache, and sore throat. In the elderly, fever may be absent, and the only signs of flu may be confusion, shortness of breath or worsening of a chronic condition. Children are more likely to have gastrointestinal symptoms (nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea).

COVID-19 specific

- COVID-19 generally appear 5 to 6 days after exposure to the virus. Symptoms are like that of a cold or flu and can include fever (37.5°C or higher), cough, sore throat, difficulty breathing, runny nose and/or nasal congestion. Other symptoms may include headache, muscle or joint pain, fatigue, diarrhoea, nausea/vomiting, loss of taste or smell and/or loss of appetite.

RSV specific

- A person with RSV can have one or more of the following symptoms: a runny nose, cough, wheezing, fever, sore throat or headache.
- Symptoms of RSV may last for up to 10 days.
- A person with RSV is usually infectious for 7-10 days after symptoms begin.
- RSV is the most common cause of respiratory and breathing infections in children and can lead to bronchiolitis and pneumonia and may trigger symptoms in children with asthma.

Call to action

- Book now for your flu or COVID-19 vaccination with your GP, participating community pharmacy, or other immunisation provider:
 - Search [Vaccination Matters](#) for more information.
- If you have any questions about getting a flu or COVID-19 vaccine, discuss with your immunisation provider, or call 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84).



Communication materials

Resources are available to download from the [Queensland Health Asset Library](#) to support this activity and help you communicate with your community on a local level.

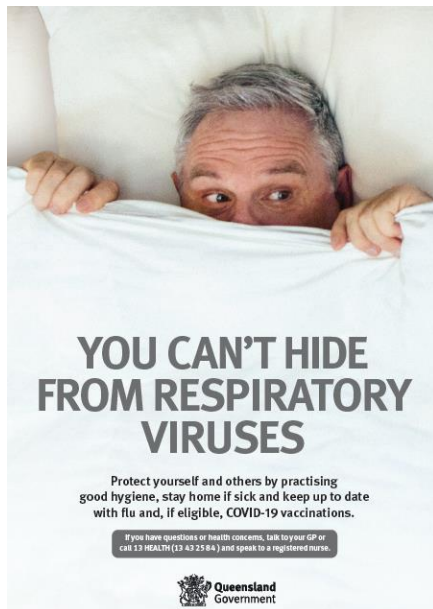
Social media

Image	Suggested post
Download image 1080 x 1080	<p>You can't hide from flu, RSV or COVID-19. What you can do, is practice good hygiene.</p> <p>Here is how to protect yourself and those around you:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">👉 Get vaccinated for flu and, if eligible, COVID-19👐 Wash your hands regularly with soap and water🏠 Stay at home when you're sick and keep sick children at home🤧 Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your arm, throw used tissues into the bin, and wash your hands after <p>Search Vaccination Matters for more.</p>

<p>Download image 1080 x 1080</p>	<p>Flu and COVID-19 are in our community.</p> <p>The best protection for your family is to get vaccinated for flu and, if eligible, COVID-19 and remember to stay home if you're sick.</p> <p>The vaccines are safe and effective.</p> <p>For more on recommendations and eligibility search Vaccination Matters.</p>
<p>Download image (1080 x 1080)</p>	<p>Infections from respiratory viruses are circulating in your community. Do you know the symptoms?</p> <p>The common ones for flu, COVID-19 and RSV include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ fever ☞ cough ☞ sore throat ☞ fatigue ☞ loss of smell ☞ aches and pains ☞ headache <p>If you have any of these symptoms, stay at home to stop the spread of infection in your community. Please call your doctor or 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) if your symptoms get worse.</p> <p>If eligible, get vaccinated for flu and COVID-19 to protect yourself and those around you. Search Vaccination Matters for more.</p>

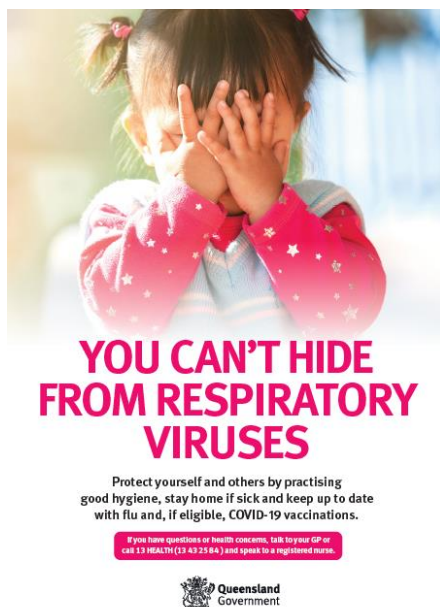
<p>Download image (1080 x 1080)</p>	<p>You can't hide from viruses like the flu, RSV and COVID-19. They're already spreading in your community.</p> <p>Remember to clean your hands regularly and stay home if you're sick.</p> <p>Get vaccinated now for the flu and, if eligible, the COVID booster.</p> <p>Talk to your doctor or pharmacist or search Vaccination Matters for more information.</p>
	 <p>There is still time to get your flu vaccine or COVID-19 booster. Talk to your GP now.</p> <hr/> <p>You can also talk to a pharmacist or call 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) and speak to a nurse.</p>  <p>Download</p>

Posters



[Download A4](#)

[Download A3](#)



[Download A3](#)

Website banners



[Website banner – lamp shade 558 x 320](#)



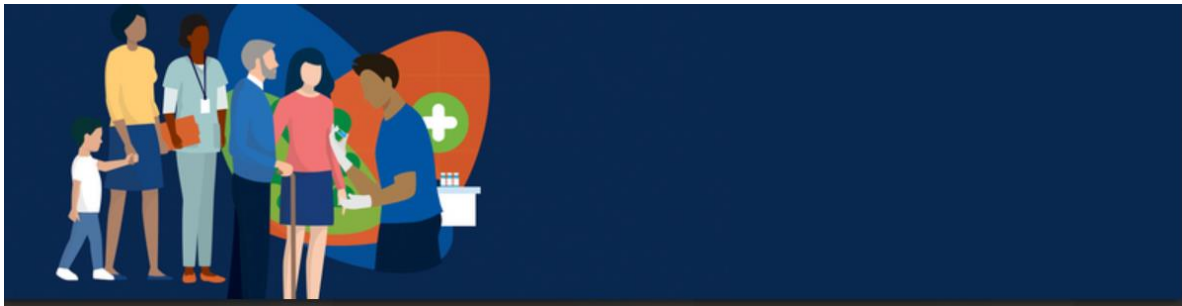
[Website banner – young girl 558 x 320](#)



[Website banner – office 1920 x 485](#)



[Website banner – office 558 x 320](#)



[Website banner – 1920 x 485](#)

Information for multicultural communities

These resources have been developed in consultation with the Refugee Health Network and partners.

Fact sheets

[About influenza \(translated fact sheets\) | Health and wellbeing | Queensland Government \(www.qld.gov.au\)](#)

What is influenza?



Influenza, or the flu, is a very contagious infection that affects the lungs. Flu is very serious. It can result in people being hospitalised, especially young kids under 5 years, people over 65 years, pregnant women and those who have diabetes, lung or heart disease.

The flu virus that spreads every year is different. Because of this, experts need to change the vaccine every time to make sure it gives your body the right kind of protection. This is why it's very important for you to get the flu shot every year.

You can lessen your chances of getting sick with the flu if you get vaccinated. The flu shot is safe and effective. It helps you to fight the virus and helps stop it from spreading to other people. If you do get infected with the flu virus, being vaccinated can help protect you from getting very sick.

Symptoms
You will usually get flu symptoms 1 to 3 days after being infected/exposed to the virus. Some of the symptoms are:

- Fever
- Muscle or joint pain
- Sore throat
- Tiredness
- Dry cough
- Nausea (feeling sick), vomiting or diarrhoea (loose and runny poo) mostly among kids.
- Headaches
- Confusion, shortness of breath – among elderly people.



Stay safe from the flu this Winter



Get vaccinated

It's a good idea to get your influenza (flu) vaccine now, ahead of the peak flu season (June – September).

You can get vaccinated at your local GP, community health clinic or pharmacy. The vaccine is recommended for anyone over the age of 6 months.

The flu vaccine is free for people who are at higher risk of getting very sick:

- children aged 6 months to 5 years
- all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 6 months and over
- people aged 6 months and over with medical conditions that can put them at higher risk of getting very sick with influenza and its complications
- pregnant women (at any time during pregnancy)
- people aged 65 years and over.

Why is vaccination important?

The flu is a very contagious infection. It makes many people sick and causes deaths every year.

It's very important to get the vaccine this year because we are more exposed to the illness compared to other years. That is because less people had the flu in recent years (due to the global pandemic) and because less people have had the flu vaccine.

The flu causes many hospitalisations for children and can also have dangerous complications. So, it's very important for children aged 6 months to 5 years to get the flu vaccine.

Getting children vaccinated also helps stop the spread to other people.



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Poster



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Social media tiles



Get your flu vaccine and COVID-19 booster today. Talk to your GP if you have any questions.

You can also call 13 HEALTH on 13 43 25 84 and speak to a nurse. Ask for an interpreter if you need one.



[Download](#)



There's still time to get the flu vaccine and COVID-19 booster! Book yours today.

You can also call 13 HEALTH on 13 43 25 84 and speak to a nurse. Ask for an interpreter if you need one.



[Download](#)



Vaccines are the best form of protection against both COVID-19 and the flu.

You can also call 13 HEALTH on 13 43 25 84 and speak to a nurse. Ask for an interpreter if you need one.



[Download](#)

Keep safe from viruses this winter

Keep up to date with your vaccinations 	Wash your hands often 
Cover your coughs and sneezes 	Stay home if you are sick 

You can also call 13 HEALTH on 13 43 25 84 and speak to a nurse. Ask for an interpreter if you need one.



[Download](#)

Information for people with disability and carers

These resources have been developed in consultation with the Queenslanders with Disability Network, Multicap and Endeavour Foundation.

Fact sheets

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The flu causes many hospitalisations for children and can also have dangerous complications. So, it's very important for children aged 6 months to 5 years to get the flu vaccine.

Getting children vaccinated also helps stop the spread to other people.



[Download](#)

[Download](#)

What are the symptoms of the flu, a cold and COVID-19?



The flu is not the same as the common cold or COVID-19. If you have symptoms, it's very difficult to tell the difference. Here are the common symptoms for all three.

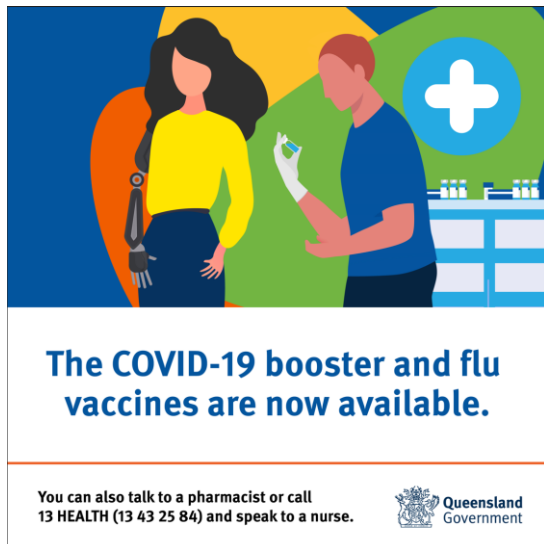
SYMPTOMS	FLU	COLD	COVID-19
Fever	Common	Rare	Common
Cough	Common	Common	Common
Sore throat	Common	Common	Sometimes
Shortness of breath	No	No	Sometimes
Fatigue	Common	Sometimes	Sometimes
Loss of smell and/or taste	Common	Common	Common
Aches and pains	Common	Sometimes	Sometimes
Headaches	Common	Sometimes	Sometimes
Runny or stuffy nose	Sometimes	Common	Sometimes
Runny poo (diarrhoea)	Sometimes <small>especially for children</small>	No	Rare
Sneezing	Sometimes	Common	No
Vomiting or nausea	Common in children, Rare in adults	Rare	Sometimes

You can lessen your chances of getting the flu if you get vaccinated. The flu shot is safe and effective. It helps you to fight the virus and helps stop it from spreading to other people.




[Download](#)

Social media tiles



The COVID-19 booster and flu vaccines are now available.

You can also talk to a pharmacist or call 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) and speak to a nurse.

 Queensland Government

This social media tile features an illustration of a pharmacist in a blue uniform and white gloves handing a vaccine vial to a woman in a yellow top. In the background, there is a pharmacy counter with several vials and a large blue cross icon. The text is centered and uses a clean, sans-serif font.

[Download](#)



The flu vaccine may be given on the same day as the COVID-19 vaccine.

If you have any concerns, talk to your GP or pharmacist. Or call 13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) and speak to a nurse.

 Queensland Government

This social media tile features an illustration of a pharmacist in a blue uniform and white gloves holding a vaccine vial. In the foreground, two large vaccine vials are shown: one labeled 'COVID-19 VACCINE' and the other 'INFLUENZA VACCINE'. The background includes a pharmacy counter and a large green cross icon. The text is centered and uses a clean, sans-serif font.

[Download](#)



**There is still time to get your
flu vaccine or COVID-19 booster.
Talk to your GP now.**

You can also talk to a pharmacist or call
13 HEALTH (13 43 25 84) and speak to a nurse.



[Download](#)

Poster



[Download](#)

Information for First Nations people

Hygiene resources for First Nations people are available on the [Queensland Health website](#).

More information

- Vaccination Matters website: <https://vaccinate.initiatives.qld.gov.au/>
- Influenza (The Flu) (health.qld.gov.au)
- [Respiratory Syncytial Virus \(RSV\)](#)
- [COVID-19 vaccine](#)
- [Home – COVID](#)
- [2023 influenza vaccination guidelines | Queensland Health](#)

General information

Summary data of notifiable conditions (including influenza, RSV and COVID-19) in Queensland.

<https://www.health.qld.gov.au/clinical-practice/guidelines-procedures/diseases-infection/surveillance/reports/notifiable/summary>

Information for healthcare professionals

COVID-19

- All adults can get a COVID-19 booster if it's been 6 months or more since their last COVID-19 vaccine or confirmed COVID-19 infection – whichever was most recent.

- A booster is particularly recommended for people at higher risk of severe illness, including people:
 - 65 years or older
 - 18 years or older with medical conditions, disability or complex health needs.
- The new COVID-19 bivalent vaccines help protect against the original strain of COVID-19 and the Omicron variants.
- A booster provides very strong protection against serious illness from COVID-19.
- For more information refer to the [ATAGI statement](#).
- The latest Queensland COVID-19 statistics can be found [online](#).

Influenza

- Annual influenza vaccination is recommended for everyone ≥ 6 months of age.
- Influenza vaccines are [funded under the National Immunisation Program](#) (NIP) for the following groups:
 - children aged 6 months to under 5 years
 - people aged 65 years or over
 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 6 months and over
 - pregnant women at any stage of pregnancy
 - people aged 6 months or over who have a [medical condition](#) that is associated with an increased risk of influenza disease complications.
- In 2023, all NIP funded influenza vaccines available are quadrivalent vaccines (QIV) including the adjuvanted (enhanced) influenza vaccine for adults aged 65 years and older.
- Influenza vaccines can be [co-administered](#) with any COVID-19 vaccine.
- For more information visit the [Queensland Health website](#).
- The latest influenza data can be found [online](#).

Respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and group A Streptococcus (iGAS)

- RSV and influenza can increase susceptibility to invasive disease, particularly for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, the immunocompromised, people with a chronic disease, people who smoke, those institutionalised or living in crowded conditions, and the very young and very old.
- There is additional risk of iGAS for pregnant and post-partum women.
- Clinicians should be on alert for signs and symptoms of sepsis and invasive disease when evaluating patients with a compatible clinical illness.
- Signs and symptoms of sepsis in an adult include a patient with a suspected infection combined with any of the following:
 - fever, chills, or low body temperature
 - tachypnoea
 - tachycardia
 - no or low urine output
 - nausea, vomiting, or diarrhoea

- fatigue, confusion, or drowsiness
- a lot of pain or they ‘feel worse than ever’.
- For paediatric patients, clinicians should consider sepsis in a child with suspected infection and any one of these signs and symptoms:
 - parental concern
 - a lot of unexplained pain or very restless
 - cold extremities
 - blotchy, blue, or pale skin or a non-blanching rash
 - altered behaviour such as drowsiness, confusion, irritability or floppiness
 - working hard to breathe with tachypnoea and in infants: long pauses in breathing
 - tachycardia
 - seizures
 - reduced urine output; fewer wet nappies than usual
 - lactate >2.
- Hypotension is also a late sign of sepsis in children.
- Remember: trust your gut and just ask – could it be sepsis? Prompt recognition and management of sepsis saves lives.
- For the management of suspected sepsis, Queensland Health clinicians should refer to the [paediatric and adult sepsis pathways](#) and urgently escalate concerns to a senior clinician for a prompt review.
- Treatment should involve blood culture sampling, early fluids and appropriate empiric antibiotics, as outlined in the antibiotic prescribing guidelines where these are included with the pathways.
- To prevent invasive infection, patients should be encouraged to:
 - Ensure they are up to date with vaccinations (IPD, meningococcal) where available and recommended in accordance with the [Queensland Immunisation Schedule](#). Respiratory viral infections can be precursors to invasive bacterial infection, it is also important for patients, especially those most at risk, to be up to date with recommended vaccinations and boosters to protect against COVID-19 and influenza.
 - Exercise good hand and respiratory hygiene and to stay home if they are sick.
 - Optimise their management of any chronic medical conditions and quit smoking.

Contact us

The [Queensland Health Asset Library](#) houses a range of collateral which you are welcome to use. Information will be regularly updated, and new resources will be added as they are produced.

For further information or assistance regarding this stakeholder kit, please contact the Queensland Health [Strategic Communications Branch](#).