

Confident Bite 5

Immunisation in Aged Care

Immunisation remains important in older age.



WHY IMMUNISATIONS MATTER

Vaccination helps reduce serious vaccine-preventable illness and can support health, function and independence.

Why Older People Are at Greater Risk:

- The immune system may not respond as strongly to infection due to age-related changes in immunity. This can increase the risk of serious disease, complications, and slower recovery.
- Complications are more likely when illness occurs
- Recovery can take longer, affecting health and independence.

It Is Never Too Late to Vaccinate

- Some people missed vaccines earlier in life or may be unsure of their vaccination history.
- Immunity can decrease over time, so adult boosters or catch-up vaccination may be recommended.
- Previous infection does not always mean ongoing protection.
- Vaccination also helps reduce spread to other vulnerable people.

Review vaccination history and discuss recommended catch-up or booster doses.

Vaccines to Think About

INFLUENZA



Annual vaccination. Helps protect against seasonal influenza and serious complications.

COVID-19



Helps maintain protection against severe illness, hospitalisation and death.

SHINGLES



Reduces the risk of shingles and complications such as prolonged nerve pain.

PNEUMOCOCCAL



Protects against serious disease including pneumonia, sepsis and meningitis.

RSV



Protects against serious respiratory illness, including pneumonia.

BOOSTERS



Tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis boosters may be recommended for some older adults.

Vaccination needs are individual

Recommendations depend on age, health conditions, previous vaccination history and other risk factors.

Current NIP quick guide Adults

- 65+ influenza, pneumococcal and shingles
- 75+ RSV
- COVID -19

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults

- Influenza: all adults
- 25+ pneumococcal
- 50+ shingles
- 60+ RSV

CHECK CURRENT GUIDANCE: Eligibility and recommendations can change. Check the Australian Immunisation Handbook, [National Immunisation Program Schedule - Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing](#) and [NT Health Immunisation Program](#) for current advice.

START THE CONVERSATION

Do not assume the older person or their family understands why vaccination is recommended. Questions or hesitation are opportunities for respectful discussion.

ASK

- “What do you know about the vaccine?”
- “Do you have any questions or concerns?”

LISTEN

Explore concerns, previous experiences, beliefs and preferences without dismissing them.

EXPLAIN

Use clear language: why it is recommended, expected benefits, common side effects and the risks of the infection.

CHECK

- “Does that makes sense?”
- “What questions do you still have?”
- “Would you like your family involved?”

Involve the older person and family

- Keep the older person at the centre of the decision.
- Ask how they want family or supporters involved.
- Use clear, culturally respectful information and allow time for questions.
- Respect informed choice; avoid pressure or judgement.
- Where required, follow consent and substitute decision-maker processes.
- Document consent, refusal or deferral and any follow-up

THE AIM IS NOT simply to get a “YES”. The aim is to support an informed decision that respects the older person’s preferences, dignity and autonomy.

REMEMBER

Immunisation is more than giving a vaccine.
Ask. Listen. Inform. Respect.

What to do: NOTICE. ASK. REPORT. SUPPORT

- **NOTICE :** Is vaccination status unclear, over-due, or are concerns being raised?
- **ASK :** Start the conversation and listen.
- **REPORT:** Escalate questions or review needs to the RN/clinician.
- **SUPPORT:** Provide reliable information and respect the person’s decision.

RN/CLINICIAN RESPONSE

- Review vaccination history and current recommendations.
- Consider individual risk, precautions and contraindications.
- Discuss benefits and risk: obtain informed consent.
- Liaise with GP, pharmacist or immunisation provider as needed.
- Document vaccination and required follow-up

READY FOR A QUICK CHALLENGE?

COMPLETE THE QUIZ

Test your knowledge and see what you remember!



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