

# Influenza vaccine dose recommendations for infants and children

In light of recent media coverage about influenza in the community, the following table sets out the influenza vaccine dose recommendations for infants and children.

## Recommended doses of influenza vaccine

| Age                 | Dose    | Number of doses (first vaccination) | Number of doses* (subsequent years) |
|---------------------|---------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 6 months - <3 years | 0.25 ml | 2†                                  | 1                                   |
| 3 – 9 years         | 0.5 ml  | 2†                                  | 1                                   |
| >9 years            | 0.5 ml  | 1                                   | 1                                   |

† **Two doses at least 1 month apart** are recommended for children **aged ≤9 years** who are receiving influenza vaccine for the first time. The same vial should not be re-used for the 2 doses.

\* If a child **6 months to ≤9 years** of age receiving influenza vaccine for the first time inadvertently does not receive the second dose within the same year, they should have 2 doses administered the following year. The IM route causes fewer local reactions and is preferred.

### Talking points:

- The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI), through the Australian Immunisation Handbook, 9<sup>th</sup> Edition, ([www.immunise.health.gov.au](http://www.immunise.health.gov.au)) has made a recommendation for an increase in the dose of influenza vaccine for children to ensure the best protection.
- The dose recommendation has been updated in line with practice overseas to reduce the margin of error when giving small volumes of vaccine and because recent evidence showed the higher dose volume was well tolerated in infants and small children. In addition a higher dose is likely to improve the immune response in children.
- Children who have already been vaccinated with the lower dosage are expected to have an appropriate level of protection and do not need a booster.
- At this stage, when the flu season generally tapers off, it is not considered necessary for children who have already received the required number of doses (two for children being vaccinated for the first time and one in subsequent years) against influenza to receive a top up dose of vaccine. Children who have not received their second vaccination should be given the new dosage.
- ATAGI continues to emphasise the importance of vaccination for anyone from 6 months of age onwards who is at increased risk for complications from influenza. Annual influenza vaccination is also recommended for any person older than 6 months of age who wishes to reduce the likelihood of becoming ill with influenza
- The Influenza chapter of the Handbook provides the most up-to date technical advice for the administration of influenza vaccination in Australia. It incorporates ATAGI's recommendations, developed on the basis of an extensive review of current evidence, and has been endorsed by the NHMRC.
- Some individuals who have been vaccinated against influenza may still experience influenza symptoms, if exposed to the virus. Such individuals should seek medical advice from their general practitioner within 48 hours of onset of these symptoms.