



## Heart Disease and Vaccines: Your Guide to Staying Heart-Smart



### IF YOU HAVE HEART DISEASE, VACCINES ARE IMPORTANT FOR YOUR OVERALL HEALTH<sup>1</sup>

- Chronic diseases, including heart disease, can weaken your immune system and increase your risk of contracting potentially serious infectious diseases like pneumonia, influenza, COVID-19 and respiratory syncytial virus (RSV)
- These common and potentially life-threatening infections may result in complications, including an increased risk of heart attack or stroke
- Vaccines provide a crucial line of defence and protection for your overall health by boosting your immune system and providing protection from infectious diseases

**Vaccines may provide important protection that can help keep your heart healthy.**

**If you have heart disease, talk to your doctor or nurse about which vaccines are right for you.**

**It is also important to stay up to date with annual vaccinations and booster shots.**



### INFLUENZA, PNEUMONIA & COVID-19 CAN SERIOUSLY AFFECT YOUR HEALTH

In **2023** these diseases combined caused nearly **20,000** deaths in Australia.<sup>2</sup>

**65+**

The majority of deaths caused by influenza and pneumonia occur in people 65 years and over.<sup>3,4</sup>

**6x**  
MORE  
LIKELY

International studies suggest adults are **6 times more likely to have a heart attack within 7 days** of being infected with influenza.<sup>5</sup> Recent studies also suggest that **influenza vaccination is associated with a 16% reduction in cardiovascular death.**<sup>6</sup>

**The Adult National Immunisation Program (NIP) Schedule** recommends the following vaccinations for people with chronic diseases. These vaccines are free to people who fit the risk criteria<sup>1</sup>:

Vaccine	Who	Frequency
Influenza	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>70 years and over</li> <li>50 years and over for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people</li> <li>Adults and children, with risk conditions (including heart disease)</li> </ul>	Annual
Pneumococcal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>70 years and over, including people without risk conditions for pneumococcal disease</li> <li>50 years and over for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people</li> <li>Children under 5 years with risk conditions for pneumococcal disease (including heart disease)</li> </ul>	Dose frequency varies from 1–3 doses over 6 years (check with your HCP†)
COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>75 years and over</li> </ul>	Every 6 months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>65-74 years</li> <li>18-64 years with chronic conditions (including heart disease)</li> </ul>	Every 12 months
Shingles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>65 years and over</li> <li>50 years and over for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people</li> <li>Adults with risk conditions</li> </ul>	2 doses

**Other vaccines** recommended for people with chronic diseases<sup>1</sup>:

Vaccine	Who	Frequency
RSV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All adults aged 60-74 years</li> </ul>	1 dose
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adults aged 60-74 years with at least 1 risk condition associated</li> </ul>	
	with increased risk of RSV (includes heart disease)	1 dose

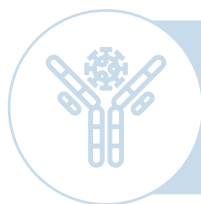
## ABOUT YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM AND VACCINES



Vaccines strengthen your immune system by introducing a harmless part of a virus or bacteria in a safe and controlled manner and training your body to recognise parts of a virus, bacteria and other foreign substances, known as antigens.



Your immune system responds to the vaccine by producing special proteins called antibodies against the antigen, to protect you from future infection.



If you are exposed to the same antigen again, your body's immune system will detect it and quickly produce, antibodies that attach to it and signal your body to destroy it.

To learn more about vaccines and the immune system, visit <https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/immunisation-get-the-facts/the-top-facts-about-immunisation/how-does-immunisation-work>



## VACCINE SAFETY<sup>7,8</sup>

Hundreds of millions of vaccines are administered safely each year. All vaccines are rigorously tested and evaluated to ensure they meet the highest standards of safety and effectiveness before they are approved for use. The safety of vaccines is also continually monitored through systems like AusVaxSafety that track any incidence of side effects (adverse events) following immunisation.

Like all medicines, vaccines can cause some side effects, like a sore arm or a mild fever, but these are usually minor and transient. In some cases, you may still get a less serious form of the illness, but you are protected from a more chronic case and complications from the disease itself. If you have any concerns about vaccination, speak to your healthcare professional.



## WHERE TO GET VACCINATED

(may vary for your local area, state or territory)

- General practices
- Pharmacies
- Community health or council clinics
- Aboriginal Medical Services

The vaccines listed in the NIP are free to those with at-risk criteria. However, check with your healthcare professional or vaccination centre regarding any potential consultation or administration fees. Please note, the RSV vaccine is not included in the NIP.

For more information about your chronic condition and the vaccines that are right for you, speak to your healthcare professional or visit [www.health.gov.au](http://www.health.gov.au)

**Disclaimer:** This brochure contains general information only. It is not intended as a substitute for medical advice provided by a qualified healthcare professional. Hearts4heart does not provide diagnostic or treatment advice for any heart condition. Please seek advice from your doctor or other qualified healthcare professional if you have specific questions or concerns regarding heart disease or any other health issue.

†HCP=Healthcare professional

**1.** Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care Australian Immunisation Handbook. Available at: <https://immunisationhandbook.health.gov.au> Accessed 8 February 2025. **2.** Australian Bureau of Statistics. Causes of Death, Australia 2023. Available at: <https://www.heart.org/en/news/2024/08/12/protecting-yourself-from-the-painful-shingles-virus-may-also-protect-cardiovascular-health> Accessed 8 February 2025. **3.** Australian Government Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Influenza in Australia. Available at: [https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/2623df7f-794f-4712-94e4-65442323784e/aihw-phe-236\\_influenza.pdf.aspx](https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/2623df7f-794f-4712-94e4-65442323784e/aihw-phe-236_influenza.pdf.aspx) Accessed 14 January 2025. **4.** Australian Government Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. Pneumococcal disease in Australia. Available at: [https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/0e959d27-97c9-419c-8636-ecc50dbda3c1/aihw-phe-236\\_pneumococcal.pdf.aspx](https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/0e959d27-97c9-419c-8636-ecc50dbda3c1/aihw-phe-236_pneumococcal.pdf.aspx) Accessed 16 January 2025. **5.** Kwong JC, Schwartz KL, Campitelli MA, et al. Acute Myocardial Infarction after Laboratory-Confirmed Influenza Infection. *N Engl J Med.* 2018;378:345-53. **6.** Yedlapati SH, Mendu A, Tummala VR, et al. Vaccines and cardiovascular outcomes: lessons learned from influenza epidemics. *Euro Heart J Suppl*, 2023; Feb 14;25(Suppl A):A17–A24. **7.** World Health Organization. Vaccines and immunization: Vaccine safety. Available at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/vaccines-and-immunization-vaccine-safety?form=MG0AV3>. Accessed 8 February 2025. **8.** Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care. Vaccine Safety in Australia. AusVaxSummary Report 2023. Available at: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/vaccine-safety-in-australia-ausvaxsummary-report-2023?language=en>. Accessed 8 February 2025. **9.** Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care. How does immunisation work? Available at: <https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/immunisation-get-the-facts/the-top-facts-about-immunisation/how-does-immunisation-work> Accessed 8 February 2025.

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