

# Beat the flu

Influenza. You can't afford it.

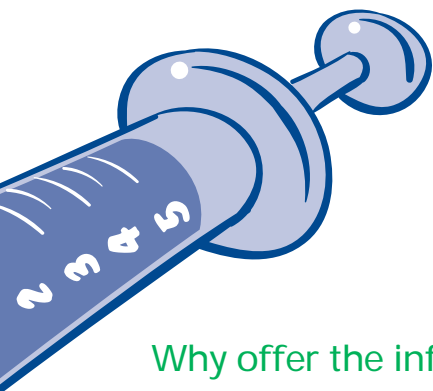
Easy guide to  
influenza vaccination  
in the workplace



## Contents

- 2 Why offer the influenza vaccination to your staff?
- 3 What's in it for you?
- 4 Dispelling flu myths
- 5 Four easy steps to vaccinating in the workplace
- 6 Need more information?





## Why offer the influenza vaccination to your staff?

A message from Dr Phil Shoemack, Medical Officer of Health,  
Bay of Plenty and Lakes Districts

Hello!

Influenza. It can lead to serious illness. It can also take a real toll on many businesses.

During the winter months, up to 20% of your staff will be hit by influenza - and this costs you money. Being proactive - and providing the influenza vaccination in the workplace - is an effective way to help reduce absenteeism during the upcoming influenza season.

I strongly recommend that you promote the influenza vaccination in your workplace and offer free or subsidised vaccination for all your employees.

The Bay of Plenty District Health Board has provided free vaccination for all staff for more than a decade and dozens of other businesses already provide workplace vaccinations. People aged 65 and over and anyone with a chronic medical condition can get vaccinated for free from their GP.

This booklet includes everything you need to know about workplace vaccinations.

Influenza is one of the most easily transmitted and preventable infectious diseases. Working together, we can help reduce the number and severity of flu cases, their serious complications, and their economic impact on businesses.

Thank you in advance for participating.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Phil Shoemack', written in a cursive style.

Dr Phil Shoemack  
**Medical Officer of Health**  
**Bay of Plenty and Lakes Districts**

## What's in it for you?

Doing what you can to keep your employees healthy is more than the right thing to do. It's a smart business decision and will save you money.

By implementing and supporting a workplace influenza vaccination programme, you can:

- Reduce absenteeism
- Prevent lost productivity and associated costs

Influenza-related absenteeism can last up to ten days and cough and fatigue can last for several weeks, slowing a full return to work.

On-site vaccination means staff don't need to take time off to visit their GP or practice nurse. People are more likely to obtain the influenza vaccination if it is available in their workplace.

### Research shows...

Influenza immunisation in healthy working adults results in:

- Decreased frequency of upper respiratory illness by 25%
- 43% fewer days of sick leave due to upper respiratory illness
- Decreased absenteeism due to all illnesses by 36%
- 44% fewer visits to doctors' offices for respiratory illness. (Nichol et al. 1995)



# Dispelling flu myths

Being vaccinated is the only proven way to specifically protect you against influenza.

There are many reasons why some people don't get vaccinated. A few people are severely allergic to eggs and shouldn't get the influenza vaccination but that is extremely rare. Others admit they're afraid of needles. Still others believe some unfounded myths about the influenza vaccine.

## Tip

Use this information in emails or newsletters to staff about the influenza vaccination.

These are some common myths and the real facts.

### **Myth 1: I didn't get the influenza vaccination last year and I didn't get sick.**

**Fact:** Even though you have avoided getting influenza so far, it does not mean that you will not get sick this year. Every year, different strains of the influenza virus circulate. By not getting vaccinated against influenza, you are increasing your chances of becoming ill.

### **Myth 2: I'm young and healthy. I don't need the influenza vaccination.**

**Fact:** Even healthy children and young adults can become seriously ill. On average, influenza can leave you ill for up to ten days, causing lost time from work, school or holiday. Plus, there's a chance you might infect others at much greater risk than you of becoming seriously ill: young children, the elderly, or someone with a medical condition. These groups, among others, could develop serious complications from influenza and may need to be hospitalised.

### **Myth 3: Getting vaccinated will give me influenza.**

**Fact:** This is simply not true. The vaccine does not contain live virus. Many people confuse influenza with a cold or other respiratory infections, which the influenza vaccine will not protect you against.

### **Myth 4: Influenza is just a bad cold.**

**Fact:** Influenza is much worse than a cold. Even healthy, young people can become quite ill and serious complications, such as pneumonia, can develop from influenza.

### **Myth 5: The influenza vaccination isn't very effective.**

**Fact:** The influenza vaccination is about 70 to 90 per cent effective in preventing influenza in healthy adults, when the vaccine is a good match to the strains. Among the elderly, the vaccine can help prevent pneumonia and hospitalisation in about six out of 10 people and is up to 85 per cent effective in preventing influenza-related death. Vaccine effectiveness varies from one person to another, depending upon their general state of health. Some individuals who get vaccinated can still get influenza. But if they do, it is usually a milder case than it would have been without having been vaccinated.

### **Myth 6: I don't need another influenza vaccination. I got one last year.**

**Fact:** The influenza vaccination is needed every year. There are many strains of the influenza virus with slightly different characteristics. The strains change, and each year a new vaccine is produced that provides protection against the three most common strains predicted for the coming season. The vaccine takes about two weeks to kick in and lasts up to one year.

## Four easy steps to vaccinating in the workplace

**ONE:** Review the information in this booklet and communicate with management, employees and unions.

Getting management, employees and unions on board is the first critical step.

**TWO:** Determine how you will vaccinate staff against influenza.

There are three options for providing the vaccination service:

- Utilise your own occupational health services staff
- Contact a local GP
- Contact a local occupational health nurse
  - Workwell New Zealand Limited - Wendy Kingsbury 07) 322 8136 or 0274 759 861
  - Bay Occupational Health Consultancy 07) 574 3411 or 021 767 684
  - Professional Health Services 07) 572 5086 or 027 276 7224

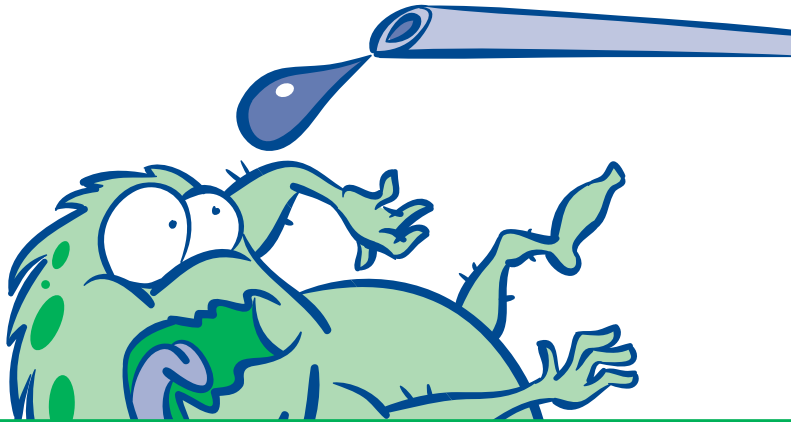
**THREE:** Arrange for the distribution of support materials (posters and leaflets) to educate your staff of the benefits of receiving the influenza vaccine, including the need to protect themselves, their families and their communities.

FREE support materials can be ordered by contacting 07) 577 3773 or [beattheflu@bopdhb.govt.nz](mailto:beattheflu@bopdhb.govt.nz)

### Tip

Arrange for emails to be sent out calling for people to book a time slot for vaccination. Send regular reminders to all staff and individual reminders to those booked in. Emails could include links to [www.influenza.org.nz](http://www.influenza.org.nz) and [www.moh.govt.nz](http://www.moh.govt.nz)

**FOUR:** Hold your influenza vaccination programme with confidence. Influenza. You can't afford it.



## Need more information?

For more information, advice or further copies of this booklet:

Phone: 07) 577 3773

Email: [beattheflu@bopdhb.govt.nz](mailto:beattheflu@bopdhb.govt.nz)

Websites: [www.influenza.org.nz](http://www.influenza.org.nz)  
[www.moh.govt.nz](http://www.moh.govt.nz)  
[www.bopdhb.govt.nz](http://www.bopdhb.govt.nz)

Support material: There are a number of FREE resources available to help educate your staff, including posters and leaflets. These resources can be ordered by contacting the number or email address above.



*Sample poster: A colour version of this poster is just one of the resources available to help you to inform your staff.*

### DISCLAIMER

Copyright Bay of Plenty District Health Board March 2007.

Any comments or feedback regarding this publication, please contact:  
07) 577 3773, [beattheflu@bopdhb.govt.nz](mailto:beattheflu@bopdhb.govt.nz)

# Beat the flu

Influenza. You can't afford it.

## How to encourage staff to get vaccinated against influenza

Well done for recognising the importance of vaccination as the only proven way to protect your staff from influenza this year. Providing staff with the opportunity for a free vaccination reduces sick leave and lost productivity, and shows you care about their wellbeing.

*How many of your staff are jumping at the opportunity?  
Is your uptake gradually increasing?  
Are you making the opportunity widely known amongst staff with regular updates?*

Here are some simple tips to help increase the number of staff choosing the influenza vaccination as the best way to prevent influenza-type illness this winter.

1. Send emails calling for people to book a specific time slot for the vaccination (rather than having opening hours and people attending at random).
2. Send regular emails reminding staff the vaccination is available and individual reminders to those booked in.
3. Use the information and resources from [www.influenza.org.nz](http://www.influenza.org.nz) or the "Easy guide to influenza vaccination in the workplace" booklet to help you inform staff about the influenza vaccination in emails or newsletters.
4. Provide a small incentive to staff who get vaccinated.
5. Provide magazines for staff to read while waiting to be vaccinated.
6. Encourage staff to encourage their workmates to get vaccinated.
7. Contact 07) 577 3773 for FREE influenza posters and leaflets to display in your workplace.





**BAY OF PLENTY**  
DISTRICT HEALTH BOARD  
HAUORA A TOI