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Dr Mark Veitch, Acting Director of Public Health

## Flu Vaccination

With the winter flu season expected to start soon, Tasmanian health authorities say now's the time to get your flu vaccination.

Acting Director of Public Health Dr Mark Veitch said there have been 87 confirmed cases of flu in Tasmania so far this year – 18 of these in May. Many more cases are expected during winter.

“I encourage Tasmanians to get their annual flu jab very soon to protect themselves and those around them from flu this year,” Dr Veitch said.

“Half of the cases so far this year have been in people older than 60 years.

“Older Tasmanians risk more severe illness from influenza.”

The flu vaccine is free to those Tasmanians at greater risk of severe flu complications, including:

- anyone aged 65 years and over
- indigenous children aged 6 months to 5 years
- indigenous people aged 15 years and over
- pregnant women
- adults and children from six months of age with chronic medical conditions, such as heart, lung or kidney diseases, asthma, diabetes, cancers, impaired immunity and neuromuscular conditions.

“The vaccine itself is free for people in these groups through GPs, but there may be a charge for the consultation,” Dr Veitch said.

Public Health Services has distributed almost 110 000 doses of free flu vaccine in Tasmania so far this year.

Cases of confirmed influenza this year have occurred in all three regions – 57 in the south, 12 in the north and 18 in the north-west; most were Influenza A type, as expected.

Dr Veitch said the 2015 flu season was likely to be similar to recent years and warned against complacency.

“Influenza can be a serious illness – don’t put off getting your jab until it’s too late.”

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