



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Health and Ageing**

**CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER**

Dear Immunisation Provider

**TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF USE OF SEASONAL INFLUENZA VACCINE IN CHILDREN AGED 5 YEARS OF AGE AND UNDER**

I am writing to advise you that, until further notice, children aged 5 years and under should not be given seasonal influenza vaccine. This advice applies to all seasonal influenza vaccines. Children who have already received one dose of the vaccine and are scheduled to have a second dose should also not be given the second dose until further advised.

There has been an apparent increase in the numbers of young children in Western Australia experiencing fever and convulsions after receiving seasonal influenza vaccination. The suspension of the use of seasonal influenza vaccine in this age group is a precautionary step, pending investigation by jurisdictional and Commonwealth health authorities to establish what is causing the apparent increase.

Recommendations for the use of seasonal influenza vaccine in children 6 years and older and in adults have not changed.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) is investigating the Western Australian data as a matter of urgency to determine whether the rates of adverse events are truly higher than expected. The TGA has contacted vaccine companies to confirm which batches of vaccine have been used in WA and will test samples from these batches in its laboratories to determine if there are any abnormalities. The TGA is convening an expert scientific advisory panel to review the information from WA and is seeking additional information from regulatory colleagues internationally.

The Department of Health and Ageing has sought advice from the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation, which is currently reviewing the available information on cases.

To date the pattern and rate of adverse reactions reported by WA have not been seen in other states. All states and territories will be reporting any additional adverse events related to seasonal influenza vaccines promptly to the TGA.

All immunisation providers are asked to report any adverse events following seasonal influenza vaccination according to their normal procedures. Reports should be made to the relevant health authority in all States and Territories, except Tasmania, where reports should be made directly to the TGA via a "Blue Card" available from the TGA website or online via the same website. Further details are at [www.tga.gov.au/problem/medicines.htm](http://www.tga.gov.au/problem/medicines.htm)

If parents or the public wish to report an adverse event directly they may contact their State or Territory health authority or the Adverse Medicine Events Line on 1300 134 237 or make a report directly to TGA online at the above website. Please make sure that the person reporting knows exactly which vaccine the person has received.

At this stage there do not appear to be implications for the swine flu vaccine Panvax®. The TGA's assessment of clinical trials and the advice of its expert committees is that Panvax® is a safe, effective vaccine for prevention of the H1N1 influenza. Vaccination with the free Panvax® H1N1 vaccine should continue to be offered to anyone over the age of 6 months who wishes to be protected against pandemic H1N1 influenza. Although there is uncertainty about how much influenza B and H3N2 may circulate here this winter, it is likely that H1N1 will be the predominant strain.

I will advise you further as the investigation progresses.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Bishop'.

**Professor Jim Bishop AO**  
MD MMed MBBS FRACP FRCPA

23 April 2010