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NZ to start immunization programme for influenza in mid-April

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More than 2.4 million doses of influenza vaccine have been secured ahead of the 2021 flu season



The Ministry of Health in New Zealand (NZ) is confirming this year's influenza immunisation programme will begin as scheduled in two weeks for those aged 65 and over and in May for other groups.

This comes as the Ministry continues work on the country's biggest vaccine programme – immunising against COVID-19 – and provides clarity of the timing of influenza immunisation alongside our broader immunisation programme.

More than 2.4 million doses of influenza vaccine have been secured ahead of the 2021 flu season – almost 300,000 doses more than last year's record supply.

The programme start for people aged under 65 will be early May – one month later than the usual schedule – due to international availability of the vaccine.

All of the vaccine for people aged 65 and over will be in New Zealand within the first week of the programme starting (April 14).

'Importantly those most in need of protection against this year's influenza season will be able to be protected soon – and for free,' says the Ministry's Director of Public Health Dr Caroline McElnay.

The Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) 'catch up' campaign will focus on GP and pharmacy-based immunisation. During the coming months the focus will be on the COVID-19 immunisation programme, which will take priority for some district health boards (DHBs).

The MMR catch up campaign will ramp up again in October, building on the infrastructure and experience from the COVID-19 immunisation campaign.