



## MyICID Public Health Advisory

### ***Influenza Surge in Malaysia – A Call for Vigilance & Vaccination***

The Malaysian Society of Infection Control and Infectious Diseases (MyICID) is deeply concerned about the rapidly rising number of influenza cases nationwide. According to the Ministry of Health (MOH), influenza clusters surged from 14 to 97 within a week—between Epidemiological Week 39 and Week 40 of 2025—with most clusters reported in schools and kindergartens.

Surveillance from 58 sentinel clinics also recorded an increase in influenza-like illness (ILI) rates, rising from 5.95% to 7.38%, indicating heightened community transmission, primarily driven by seasonal Influenza A (H3) virus activity.

### **Why we should be vigilant?**

The current influenza uptick in 2025 serves as a timely reminder that influenza remains a serious public health threat. It is not a harmless flu—complications such as pneumonia, respiratory failure, and hospitalisation can occur, especially among the elderly, young children, pregnant women, and individuals with chronic diseases.

Influenza often sets off a domino effect, worsening pre-existing medical conditions—for example, triggering a heart attack, heart failure exacerbation, or stroke. These complications further strain Malaysia's already stretched healthcare system and can adversely affect overall patient care and outcomes.

Globally, the 2024–25 influenza season in the United States (US) recorded unusually high hospitalisations, particularly among children, including some with neurological complications. Locally, surveillance data similarly indicate higher-than-usual influenza admissions, underscoring the urgent need for vigilance and early recognition of potential complications.

### **Who is at high risk?**

Anyone who is unvaccinated is at higher risk of severe influenza. Specific high-risk groups include:

- Adults  $\geq 60$  years old
- Residents of nursing or old-age homes

- Children <2 years old
- Individuals with chronic conditions, such as heart, lung, or kidney diseases, and diabetes)
- Obese individuals (BMI  $\geq 40$  kg/m<sup>2</sup>)
- People with compromised immunity
- Pregnant women up to 2 weeks post-delivery

## Recognising signs of severe influenza

Most influenza cases improve within 3–5 days with rest, adequate fluids, and paracetamol if febrile. Limit contact with others to prevent transmission. However, seek urgent medical attention if you experience any of the following warning signs:

- *Adults:* Difficulty breathing, persistent chest or abdominal pain, dizziness, confusion, seizures, low urine output, severe muscle pain or weakness, worsening fever or cough, or deterioration of chronic medical conditions.
- *Children:* Rapid or laboured breathing with visible chest indrawing or rib retraction, difficulty eating or drinking, blue lips or face, vomiting all intake, signs of dehydration, reduced urination (fewer than 3 wet diapers or bathroom trips per day), or excessive irritability or sleepiness.

## Preventive measures and vaccination

Annual influenza vaccination offers the best protection against severe influenza, as circulating strains evolve and immunity wanes. We strongly encourage vaccination for at-risk individuals and healthcare workers. The MOH's free vaccination programme for seniors with comorbidities is an important step in protecting vulnerable populations. However, anyone aged 6 months and older can be vaccinated to reduce the risk of severe disease. US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) data for the 2024–25 flu season showed that vaccination prevented hospitalisation in 63–78% of children and adolescents, and 41–55% of adults.

We advise the public not to view influenza vaccination merely as a reactive measure during outbreaks or before travel, but rather as an annual health habit and a key component of preventive care, especially for those with underlying health conditions. Vaccination should be integrated into routine health maintenance, much like regular exercise and healthy eating.

In addition to vaccination, preventive measures should include:

- Covering your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing
- Washing hands frequently or using hand sanitizer
- Wearing a facemask if symptomatic or in crowded places
- Avoiding close contact with individuals who are unwell
- Staying home until symptoms improve and you are fever-free for at least 24 hours

## Combating misinformation

We are concerned about false claims on social media that discourage vaccination. Influenza vaccines are safe, effective, and lifesaving. The public, healthcare providers, and media are urged to rely on credible sources such as the MOH, World Health Organization (WHO), CDC, and professional medical bodies.

MyICID reaffirms its commitment to supporting Malaysia's public health efforts in influenza prevention and education. Through vaccination, responsible behaviour, and truthful information sharing, we can collectively reduce the burden of influenza and protect the health of all Malaysians.



**30 October 2025**

#MyICID #Influenza #FluPrevention #GetVaccinated #PublicHealth

### References:

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