

! Winter brings increased risks of respiratory illnesses. Cold weather and indoor crowding heighten transmission, making early planning essential to reduce GP burden and hospital admissions. This QulK Tip outlines key actions for general practices to support patient care, workforce readiness, and community resilience during winter.

1. Key Seasonal Threats and Trends

- [Influenza](#): Transition to trivalent vaccines (from quadrivalent) with updated strains. Early activity expected in 2026. A new live attenuated influenza vaccine (FluMist) is available for children aged 2-17 years.
- [RSV](#): Focus on high-risk groups; the maternal vaccine (Abrysvo) is funded under the NIP for use at 28-36 weeks pregnancy. Monoclonal antibodies (Beyfortus) for infants up to 8 months (or high-risk up to 2 years).
- [COVID-19](#): ATAGI recommends boosters; consider co-administration with flu vaccines.
- Other infections to consider: pertussis, measles, and pneumococcal co-infections.

2. Prepare your practice

- Ensure same-day access for urgent issues and post-discharge follow up to reduce emergency department presentations
- Review workforce planning, including covering sick leave and surge capacity
- Have an up-to-date [emergency plan](#) including a process to communicate closures or service changes
- Stocking and ordering of personal protective equipment (PPE), testing kits and cleaning supplies
- [Administering vaccines](#), including managing [vaccine storage](#) and [cold chain requirements](#)

3. Review relevant HealthPathways

- [Influenza](#)
- [COVID-19](#)
- [Pertussis](#)
- [Respiratory and Infectious Diseases](#)
- [Adverse Events Following Immunisation \(AEFI\)](#)

4. Review your digital health capability and infrastructure

Ensure your systems can support increased winter demand, including telehealth and remote monitoring.

- [CHN Digital Health QulK Step](#)
- [Australian Digital Health Agency](#)
- [My Health Record](#)
- [RACGP - Telehealth](#)



5.

Identify your vulnerable patients

Identifying vulnerable patients allows proactive care planning during the winter season. [POLAR](#) is an essential audit tool that can identify and group your patients. Visit the [Knowledge Base](#) to learn how to filter your patient list or contact the QI team.



6.

Prepare your patients

Patient education is essential in reducing winter-related illnesses. Encourage patients especially vulnerable groups to:

- Stay up to date with influenza and COVID-19 vaccination
- Maintain asthma and COPD action plans
- Keep warm safely and avoid indoor air hazards
- Recognise early signs of respiratory illness

Helpful resources:

- [Asthma action plans](#)
- [Be well this winter](#)
- [Get ready for winter respiratory illnesses](#)
- [healthdirect Symptom Checker](#)



7.

Relevant health resources

- [Asthma Winter Checklist](#)
- [Clinician Alerts](#)
- [Empowering Immunisation Conversations](#)
- [Infection Prevention and Control](#)
- [Influenza Vaccine Changes](#)
- [Triage](#)



8.

Get to know care options during the winter season

Ensure patients know where to access the right health care at the right time when you are closed or at capacity.

- [CHN After Hours QulK Tip](#)
- [healthdirect Service Finder](#)
- [Medicare Urgent Care Clinic](#)



9.

Staff support and wellbeing

- [Access EAP](#) – Free and confidential counselling provided by CHN for those working in primary care in the ACT.
- [Drs4Drs](#) – Well-being of doctors and medical student
- [Nurse & Midwife Support](#) – NM Support
- [Peer support & counselling](#) – Nurse Midwife Health Program Australia
- [RACGP Wellbeing Hub](#)
- [TEN – The Essentials Network for Health Professionals](#) – Black Dog Institute