THE pandemic flu vaccine for children, Panvax Junior, is being withdrawn after routine tests showed its potency has declined.

The Therapeutic Goods Administration said if the vaccine's potency was to decline further, it may not remain effective.

A TGA statement said existing stocks of Panvax Junior should be considered expired and supplies would be retrieved by manufacturer CSL.

It stressed that the advice was limited to Panvax Junior — which comes in pre-filled syringes — and did not affect Panvax in multi-dose vials or trivalent seasonal flu vaccines that contain H1N1.

The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) advised that children who had already received two doses of Panvax Junior did not need to be revaccinated. If a child aged six months to three years was due to receive a second dose of Panvax, a 0.25mL dose could be given from a Panvax multi-dose vial.

Alternatively, ATAGI advised using the 2010 seasonal influenza vaccines Vaxigrip and Influvac, which also contain H1N1 and have been cleared for use in children.

The decline in potency appeared to be related to an inherent characteristic of the H1N1 strain, which reduced the stability of the haemagglutinin, especially in low-dose formulations that are preservative-free, ATAGI said.

Professor Robert Booy, co-director of the National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance, said the pandemic vaccine was already seen as less ideal than seasonal vaccine, which includes protection against both H1N1 and seasonal influenza strains.

Meanwhile, a recent DOHA influenza surveillance report noted a jump in laboratory-confirmed influenza cases in some states.

Sarah Colyer