

**NO HEALTHCARE
WORKER IS IMMUNE
FROM FLU...**



**...NOT EVEN
YOU.**

Vaccination is the only protection.

www.immunisation.ie

BE SURE. BE SAFE. VACCINATE.

FLU VACCINE 2011-2012

If you are a healthcare worker, whether in a hospital or in the community, the last thing you want is to bring the flu home. The best way to protect yourself, your family and those in your care is to get the seasonal flu vaccine.

Get the vaccine - not the flu.

What is seasonal flu (influenza)?

Flu is a highly infectious viral illness of the respiratory tract that can be life threatening. Most people with flu are sick for 5-7 days with high temperature, sore throat, muscle pains, fatigue and headache. Some people have a more serious illness and may be admitted to hospital.

What are the complications of flu?

Complications of flu include bronchitis, pneumonia, ear infections and rarely acute encephalopathy (swelling of the brain). Severe disease and death is most likely in people with chronic medical conditions and the elderly. Worldwide, flu causes between 3 and 5 million cases of severe disease each year and 250,000 to 500,000 deaths.

Is it the flu or a cold?

Flu symptoms start suddenly with fever, muscle aches, headache and fatigue. A cold usually comes on gradually with a sore throat and a blocked or runny nose and is generally mild compared to the flu.

How is flu spread?

Flu is spread by coughing and sneezing. Anyone with flu can be infectious from 1 day before to 3 – 5 days after onset of symptoms. This means that you can pass on the flu virus to somebody you care for even before you know that you are sick.

Why do I need the vaccine?

Flu vaccine is recommended for healthcare workers to protect you from getting flu and to reduce transmission of flu to you, your family and your patients. You are caring for elderly and at risk patients who may not get sufficient protection from the vaccine themselves.

Why do I need flu vaccine every year?

Each year the seasonal (annual) flu vaccine contains three common influenza virus strains. The flu virus changes each year this is why a new influenza vaccine has to be given each year. This year's flu vaccine contains the Swine Flu strain the new virus that caused a pandemic in 2009 and which is likely to be one of the common strains causing flu this Winter.

How does seasonal flu vaccine work?

Seasonal flu vaccine helps the person's immune system to produce antibodies to the flu virus. When someone who has been vaccinated comes into contact with the virus these antibodies attack the virus.

How safe is flu vaccine?

Seasonal flu vaccines have been given for more than 60 years to millions of people worldwide. Reactions are generally mild and serious side effects are very rare. The seasonal flu vaccines cannot give you the flu.

Who should be vaccinated?

Flu vaccine is recommended for all frontline healthcare workers including:

- Medical, nursing and paramedical staff,
- Medical and nursing students,
- Dental personnel,
- Hospital porters and cleaners,
- Ambulance personnel,
- Carers.

The vaccine is also recommended for other groups because they are at an increased risk of developing complications from the flu.

Should pregnant healthcare workers be vaccinated?

Yes. Seasonal flu vaccine is recommended for all pregnant women. This is because during the pandemic, pregnant women were at higher risk of complications from the Swine Flu virus. The Swine Flu virus is still around and is expected to be the one of the common strains this winter. Pregnant women need to be protected. The seasonal flu vaccine will provide protection against the Swine Flu virus and can be given at any stage of pregnancy.

If you are pregnant please read the HSE leaflet "Flu Vaccine Information for pregnant women".

Is there anyone who cannot get flu vaccine?

Most people can get flu vaccine.

It is not recommended for those who have:

- A history of anaphylactic reaction to a previous dose of flu vaccine or any part of the vaccine.

What about people with egg allergy?

People with egg allergy can get seasonal flu vaccine. This may be given by your occupational health unit or you may need referral to a hospital specialist.

When should vaccination be postponed?

There are very few reasons why vaccination should be postponed. Vaccination should be re-scheduled if you have an acute illness with a temperature greater than 38°C.

Can the vaccine cause flu?

No. The viruses in the vaccine are killed and cannot cause flu.

What can I expect following vaccination?

You may get soreness or redness around the injection site. You may experience a mild generalised reaction of fever, fatigue and headache for up to 48 hours after receiving the vaccine. These non-specific side effects do not mean that you are getting flu.

Healthcare workers should:

- Put their patient's interests first,
- Do no harm,
- Protect those who cannot protect themselves.

How do I get vaccinated?

Contact your line manager or occupational health department.

Where can I get more information?

Visit **www.immunisation.ie**



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