

Even healthy people can catch & spread the flu bug.



Flu Vaccination Questions & Answers

Q: What is influenza (flu) and how is it transmitted?^{1,2,3}

Influenza is a viral infection, caused by influenza virus types A, B or C. The virus is transmitted by virus-containing aerosols produced by coughing, sneezing or by direct contact with respiratory secretions.

Q: What are the symptoms of influenza?^{1,2}

Persons with influenza may experience fever, cough, sore throat, fatigue, muscle aches, headaches, runny nose, sneezing and chills. Children may also experience vomiting and diarrhoea.

Q: How long does a person with influenza remain contagious?^{1,2}

The period between infection and onset of symptoms (incubation period) for influenza is 1- 3 days. A person with influenza may be contagious 24 hours before symptoms begin and continue to be infectious for a week after the onset of symptoms.

Q: Is influenza considered serious?^{1,2}

Infected persons may become unwell for up to a week. Most patients take up to 2 weeks to recover from influenza, however it can cause complications or even death. Some of the complications can include: pneumonia, bronchitis, croup and ear infections.

Q: What are some common side effects of Influenza vaccines?^{1,2}

Common side effects include soreness, redness, pain and swelling at the injection site, drowsiness, tiredness, muscle aches and fever. These side effects are usually mild and go away within a few days, usually without any treatment. You should contact your healthcare professional if you are concerned about any symptoms you experience or if you have a persistent high temperature. If you have any allergies or are concerned about the potential side effects of the flu vaccine please discuss this with your healthcare professional.

Q: Can you get influenza from a flu vaccine?^{1,2}

Influenza vaccines will not give you the flu as the vaccines available in Australia do not contain 'live' virus. After vaccination, the person will develop antibody levels that are likely to protect them against the strains of virus represented in the vaccine.

Q: Who can get influenza?^{1,2,3}

People of all ages are susceptible to the flu, even those who are young and healthy. It is spread easily and can sweep through schools, nursing homes, businesses or towns.

Q. Why do I need to get vaccinated against the flu every year?^{1,2}

There are two main reasons for getting a yearly flu vaccine:

- Flu viruses are frequently changing and vaccines may be updated from one season to the next to protect against the most recent and common circulating strains.
- A person's immune protection from influenza vaccination declines over time and annual vaccination is recommended.

Q. When is the best time to get vaccinated?^{1,2}

Vaccination is best undertaken in autumn, (March-May) in anticipation of Australia's peak flu season which is usually between June and September.

Q. Does flu vaccine work right away?¹

No. Protection is usually achieved within 10 to 14 days of vaccination and there is evidence of increased immunity within a few days.

Q: What age can children be vaccinated against the flu?¹

Children can be vaccinated from the age of 6 months. Please contact your healthcare professional for further information.

Vaccination is the most effective protection against influenza^{1,3}

For further information on flu vaccinations please talk to your healthcare professional.

References: 1. Australian Government Department of Health. The Australian Immunisation Handbook 10th Ed (June 2015 update): Influenza. Available from: <http://www.immunise.health.gov.au/internet/immunise/publishing.nsf/Content/Handbook10-home> Accessed 12th October 2016. 2. National Centre for Immunization Research & Surveillance) Factsheet: Influenza. July 2015. Available from http://ncirs.edu.au/assets/provider_resources/fact-sheets/influenza-fact-sheet.pdf Accessed 12th October 2016. 3. WHO INFLUENZA FACT SHEET March 2014 Available from <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs211/en/> Accessed 12th October 2016.