



## Flu Vaccine Fact Sheet

### Three key points about the flu vaccine

- It contains no live virus.
- The composition of the vaccine changes every year.
- The flu shot is safe for pregnant women at all stages of pregnancy.

### How effective is the influenza vaccine?

The influenza vaccine is up to 90% effective in protecting healthy adults from the flu. It's important to know that it takes around two weeks after vaccination for a person to develop protection against influenza infection.

Also, the influenza vaccine does not protect against respiratory illness caused by other viruses, such as the common cold.

### Can I catch the flu from the vaccine?

No. It's impossible to catch the flu from the vaccine.

The influenza vaccine contains only killed and inactivated virus particles. Because the virus particles are not alive, they can't spread through your respiratory system or cause illness like the actual virus.

### How does the vaccine work?

Flu vaccines cause antibodies to develop in the body about two weeks after vaccination. These antibodies protect against infection from the particular virus strains (killed) that make up the vaccine each year.

The World Health Organisation determines which virus strains will be the most common each season.

### What are the benefits of vaccination?

There are lots of reasons to get a flu shot each year.

Flu vaccinations can keep you from getting sick from the flu. Protecting yourself from the flu also protects the more vulnerable people around you.

Flu vaccinations can help protect people at greater risk of getting seriously ill from flu, like older adults, people with chronic health conditions and young children (especially infants younger than 6 months old who are too young to get vaccinated).

Flu vaccinations also may make your illness milder if you do get sick.

Flu vaccinations can also reduce the risk of more serious flu outcomes, like hospitalisations and deaths.

### Why do I need to get vaccinated against the flu every year?

There are two main reasons for getting an annual flu shot:

- Flu viruses are frequently changing, and vaccines may be updated each season to protect against the most recent and common circulating strains.
- Your immune protection from influenza vaccination declines over time.

### **Should I get the vaccine if I'm feeling unwell?**

If you're suffering from an acute feverish illness (temperature equal to or above 38.5 °C), you shouldn't get the vaccine until you have fully recovered.

If you're suffering from a mild illness and don't have a fever, there's no reason not to get the vaccine.

Please let us know if you're feeling unwell on the day of your vaccination appointment. We'll do our best to reschedule.

### **Can I get the flu shot and COVID-19 vaccine at the same time?**

Yes, COVID vaccines can be co-administered (that is, given on the same day) with an influenza vaccine.

The COVID vaccine doesn't protect you against the flu, so you should still have your annual flu shot.

There is no indication as to when, and if, the seasonal flu shot will incorporate a COVID vaccine element.

Though not available yet, trials are underway on a combined flu and COVID vaccination.

**Note: We don't offer COVID vaccinations at the clinic.**

### **What are the possible side effects of the flu shot?**

Common side effects following seasonal flu vaccinations include soreness, fever, redness, pain, and swelling at the injection site, vomiting and malaise. These side effects are usually mild and resolve within a few days, usually quickly without any treatment.

Generally, reactions may occur within a few hours following vaccination and may last one to two days. Allergic reactions are uncommon after vaccination but can be severe in some people. These reactions are due to an allergy to egg protein or other vaccine components, including the antibiotics neomycin and polymyxin, which are in the vaccine in small amounts.

### **Is it safe for me to get the flu shot if I'm pregnant?**

Yes, you can safely receive the flu vaccine at any stage of pregnancy.

Pregnant women are at increased risk of severe disease or complications from the flu. Vaccinating against the flu during pregnancy can not only protect pregnant women but provide ongoing protection to a newborn baby for the first six months after birth.

If in doubt, please speak to your GP.