

## What is the flu?



Influenza, commonly known as the flu, is a highly contagious infection of the nose, throat and lungs caused by the influenza virus. The flu is more serious than the common cold. Symptoms include:

- Rapid onset of fever
- Headache
- Muscle aches
- Fatigue
- Sneezing
- Running nose
- Sore throat
- Cough.

Most people recover within a week, although the cough and fatigue may last longer. The flu can be a serious illness, potentially fatal, particularly in people aged over 65 or those with a chronic illness.

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### Three things you might not know about the flu vaccination:

1. There is no live virus in the flu shot
2. The composition of the vaccine changes every year
3. The flu shot is safe for pregnant women at all stages of their pregnancy.

### How do you treat the flu?

The recommended treatment is rest, drinking plenty of fluids and use of paracetamol for the relief of pain and fever. You should see your local doctor if you are concerned about the symptoms or if the symptoms are getting worse. Antiviral medication may be prescribed by your doctor if you are at risk of complications from the flu. Antiviral medication needs to be started within 48 hours from the onset of flu symptoms. Antibiotics are not effective for treating the flu.

### How do you prevent the flu?

Simple ways to control the spread of the flu are to get the annual flu vaccination and to practice good personal hygiene such as washing your hands, wiping over frequently touched surfaces with a cleaning cloth covered in detergent and covering your mouth when coughing or sneezing.

### Who should get the flu vaccination?

An annual flu vaccination is recommended for any person from six months of age who wishes to reduce the chance of being ill with the flu. For anyone in a high risk category, the flu can be a serious and potentially fatal illness. The National Health and Medical Research Council recommends annual vaccinations for people with:

- Heart conditions
- Severe asthma
- Lung conditions
- Diabetes
- Kidney problems
- Impaired immunity
- Malignant cancers
- Pregnant women
- Chronic neurological disorders.

## Is the flu vaccination safe for pregnant women?

Yes. The flu vaccination can be safely given during 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 I'm pregnant, can you administer my flu vaccination at my workplace?

No. We will not administer flu vaccinations to pregnant women in the workplace as we believe this should be administered by a family doctor or obstetrician to ensure continuity of care.

## Who should not get the flu vaccination?

- People who are severely allergic to chicken products such as eggs and feathers
- If you have a severe infection with a high fever
- If you have ever had Guillain-Barre Syndrome
- If you are taking any of the following medications:
  - › Warfarin (Coumardin, Marevan)
  - › Theophylline Austin (Nuelin, Theo-due)
  - › Phenytoin (Dilantin).

Although no harm is done with having the vaccination with these medications, it can sometimes increase the toxicity of them and therefore should be administered under the supervision of a family doctor.

## Are there any side effects from the flu vaccination?

Like any medication, some people may experience an unexpected reaction to the flu vaccination. Common side effects include:

- Pain, redness and swelling at the injection site
- Low grade temperature
- Headache or muscle aches
- Drowsiness or tiredness
- Generally feeling unwell
- A temporary small lump at the injection site.

Most side effects are minor, last a short time, resolve without any treatment and do not lead to any long-term problems. Generally, mild reactions begin within six to 12 hours. As with any medication, very rarely will you have a severe allergic reaction which will usually occur within 15 minutes of receiving the vaccination. Due to this, it is important for you to wait for 15 minutes after receiving it before leaving.

## Who will administer the flu vaccination?

At your workplace, the vaccination will be administered by a registered nurse who has current emergency procedure training in accordance with state and territory regulations.

## Need to organise your flu vaccination this season?

We offer both in-clinic and onsite Flu Programs that are flexible and affordable.

**To talk to someone about organising your Flu Program  
this year contact us on:**

**P:** 1300 793 004

**E:** [flu@sonichealthplus.com.au](mailto:flu@sonichealthplus.com.au)

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