

**10 DAYS  
OF HEADACHES,  
FEVER AND  
MUSCLE PAIN.**

or  
**A TEN  
SECOND  
FLU SHOT.**

**Vaccination is the only protection.**

**[www.immunisation.ie](http://www.immunisation.ie)**

**BE SURE. BE SAFE. VACCINATE.**

## **FLU VACCINE 2011-2012**

### **What is seasonal flu (influenza)?**

Seasonal flu is a highly infectious viral illness of the respiratory tract that can be life threatening.

### **Can flu cause serious illness?**

Flu is a serious illness with most deaths from seasonal flu occurring in people aged 65 years and over. Swine Flu, a new flu virus caused a pandemic in 2009 and infected in particular young children, pregnant women and those under 65 years with long term medical conditions.

### **Is it cold or flu?**

Flu symptoms come on suddenly with a fever, muscle aches, headache and fatigue. A cold is a much less severe illness than flu. A cold usually starts gradually with a sore throat and a blocked or runny nose. Symptoms of a cold are generally mild compared to flu.

### **What is the seasonal (annual) flu vaccine?**

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.

### **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 get seasonal flu vaccine?

Vaccination is strongly recommended for;

- Persons aged 65 and over,
- Those with a long-term medical condition such as diabetes, heart or lung disease,
- People whose immune system is impaired due to disease or treatment,
- Persons with a body mass index (BMI) over 40,
- Pregnant women (can be given at any stage of pregnancy),
- Residents of nursing homes and other long stay institutions,
- Healthcare workers,
- Carers,
- People with regular close contact with poultry, water fowl or pigs.

## Who should NOT get seasonal flu vaccine?

The vaccine should not be given to those with a history of severe allergic (anaphylaxis) reaction to a previous dose of the vaccine or any of its constituents.

## **What about people with egg allergy?**

People with egg allergy can get seasonal flu vaccine. This may be given by your GP 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.

## **Why do pregnant women need to get seasonal flu vaccine?**

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 most common strain 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"

## **When should you get the flu vaccine?**

Vaccination should take place in September and October.

## **How long does it take the vaccines to work?**

The vaccine starts to work within two weeks.

## What can I expect after vaccination?

The most common side effects will be mild and may include soreness, redness or swelling where the injection was given. Headache, fever, aches and tiredness may occur. Some people may have mild sweating and shivering as their immune system responds to the vaccine, but this is not flu and will pass after a day or so.

## I am in one of the at risk groups so how do I get vaccinated?

If you have a 'Medical Card' or 'GP Visit Card' the vaccine and consultation are free.

If you do not have a 'Medical Card' or 'GP Visit Card' you will be charged a consultation fee for seasonal flu vaccine.

**Please make an appointment now.**

## Pneumococcal vaccine

If you are 65 or over or have a long term medical condition you should also ask your doctor about the pneumococcal vaccine which protects against pneumonia if you have not previously received it.

You usually only need to get this vaccine ONCE.

**For more information visit  
[www.immunisation.ie](http://www.immunisation.ie)**



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