

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT INFLUENZA AND VACCINE

WHAT IS INFLUENZA (FLU)? Flu is a viral infection of the nose, throat, bronchial tubes, and lungs that can make someone of any age ill. Usually the flu occurs in the U.S. from November to April. The symptoms are fever, chills, cough and soreness and aching of the back, arms and legs. Although most people are ill for only a few days, some persons have a much more serious illness and may need to go to the hospital.

WHO SHOULD BE VACCINATED? Because flu is usually not life threatening in healthy people and most recover fully, health officials emphasize the use of vaccine for the elderly and those with other health problems which make them more likely to be seriously ill or to die from the flu or its complications. For example, people who have low resistance to infections are more likely to be more seriously affected by the flu. The following groups are at increased risk for serious illness with the flu and should receive vaccine:

- Health people 65 years of age and older.
- Adults and children with long-term heart or lung problems which caused them to see a doctor regularly, or to be admitted to a hospital for care during the past year.
- Residents of nursing homes, and other institution housing patients of any age who have serious long term health problems.
- People of any age who during the past year have regularly seen a doctor or have been admitted to a hospital for treatment of kidney disease, cystic fibrosis, diabetes, anemia or severe asthma.
- People who have a type of cancer or immunological disorder (or use certain types of medicines) that lowers the resistance to infections. Since flu may cause serious illness and complications in person infected with the AIDS virus, these individuals should receive the flu vaccine.
- Children and teenagers (6 months through 18 years of age) on long-term treatment with aspirin who, if they catch the flu, may be at risk of getting Reye syndrome.

Medical staff that provides care to high-risk patients in health care facilities should be vaccinated to reduce the possibility that the patients catch the flu. Family members or others who provide care to high-risk persons at home should be vaccinated. The possibility of spreading the flu to high-risk person can be reduced by vaccinating.

- Doctors, nurses, and other in both hospital and outpatient care settings who have extensive contact with high-risk patients in all age groups.
- Personnel of nursing homes and chronic-care facilities who have contact with patients/residents.
- People who provide care to high-risk persons at home such as visiting nurses, volunteers and household members, including children, whether or not they are providers of care.

A flu shot may also be given to:

- Persons wishing to reduce their chances of getting the flu.
- Persons who provide essential community services.
- Students or others in schools and colleges if outbreaks would cause major disruptions of activities.
- Persons traveling to the tropics at any time of the year or to countries south of the equator during April-September.

INFLUENZA VACCINE: The viruses that cause flu frequently change, so people who have been infected or given a flu shot in previous years may become infected with a new strain. Because of this, and because any immunity produced by the flu shot will possibly decrease in the year after vaccination, person in the high-risk groups listed should be vaccinated every year. All the viruses in the vaccine are killed so that they cannot infect anyone. Vaccine will begin to provide its protective effect after about one or two weeks, and immunity may decrease, on average, after several months. Flu shots will not protect all persons who get them against the flu. Nor will they protect against other illnesses that resemble the flu.

DOSAGE: A single flu shot is needed each season for persons 9 years of age and older. But children less than 9 years of age may need a second shot after about a month. The doctor or nurse giving the flu shot will discuss this

with the parents or guardians. Children should be given only vaccine that has been chemically treated during manufacture (split virus) to reduce chances of any side effects. Split-virus vaccines can also be used in adults.

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS FROM THE VACCINE: Most people will have no side effects from recent flu vaccines. Flu shots are given by injection, which may cause soreness for a day or two at the injection site, and occasionally may also cause a fever or achiness for one or two days. Unlike the 1976 swine flu vaccine, recent flu shots have not been linked to the paralytic illness Guillain Barre Syndrome. As is the case with most drugs or vaccines, there is a possibility that allergic or more serious reactions, or even death, could occur with the flu shot.

SIMULTANEOUS USE OF OTHER VACCINES: The target group for flue and pneumococcal vaccination overlap. Both vaccines can be given at the same time at different sites without increasing side effects. High-risk children may also receive flu vaccine at the same time as measles, mumps, rubella, heamophilus, influenza type b and oral poliovirus vaccines, but at different sites. Flu vaccine should not be given within 3 days of vaccination with pertussis vaccine.

WARNING – SOME PEOPLE SHOULD CHECK WITH A DOCTOR BEFORE TAKING FLU VACCINE:

- Persons who should not be given the flu shot include those with an allergy to eggs that causes dangerous reactions if they eat eggs.
- Anyone who has ever been paralyzed with Guillain Barre Syndrome should seek advice from their doctor about special risks that might exist in their cases.
- Women who are pregnant or might be pregnant should consult with their doctor.
- Persons who are ill and have a fever should delay vaccination until fever and other temporary symptoms have gone.

QUESTIONS: If you have any questions about flu or flu vaccination, please ask now or call your doctor before requesting the vaccine.

I have read or have had explained to me the information on this form about seasonal influenza and H1N1 influenza vaccines. I have had a chance to ask questions which were answered to my satisfaction.

***** Seasonal Influenza*****

- I believe I understand the benefits and risks of flu vaccine and request that the vaccine be given to me or to the person named below for whom I am authorized to make this request.
- I have already received a seasonal flu vaccine.
- I intend to receive a seasonal flu vaccine from my PCP, pharmacy, employer.
- I do not wish to be vaccinated for the seasonal flu.

***** H1N1 Influenza*****

- I believe I understand the benefits and risks of H1N1 flu vaccine and request that the vaccine be given to me or to the person named below for whom I am authorized to make this request.
- I have already received a H1N1 flu vaccine.
- I intend to receive a H1N1 flu vaccine from my PCP, pharmacy, employer.
- I do not wish to be vaccinated for H1N1 influenza and will complete a declination form.

NAME: _____

AGE: _____

ADDRESS: _____

SIGNATURE: _____

DATE: _____