

## ► Influenza (Flu) Vaccine



*"Vaccination is good protection"*

This vaccine protects you against influenza (flu) and its complications. It does not protect you against colds and respiratory infections caused by other viruses.

### DISEASES

#### **Influenza is spread by:**

- Contact with secretions from the nose and throat of an infected person.

#### **Influenza causes:**

- Fever
- Cough
- Fatigue
- Headaches
- Muscle pains
- General discomfort

#### **Possible complications of influenza include:**

- Ear infections
- Sinus infections
- Bronchitis
- Pneumonia
- Death

## The Vaccine

Vaccination is the best way to protect yourself against influenza and its complications. The vaccine may be given starting at 6 months old. It is recommended for those at a higher risk of complications and persons who can pass the disease on to them. It is also recommended for those who want to reduce their risk of catching influenza. The vaccine must be administered each year in fall. Children under 9 years of age who have not previously been vaccinated against influenza receive two doses of the vaccine, the second a month after the first.

The risk of complications from influenza is higher for children under 2 years, persons 60 years or over, and anyone with certain chronic illnesses like heart, lung, kidney disease, diabetes, cancer, immunosuppression or asthma.

The influenza vaccine is safe. It cannot give you influenza (flu).

Inform your health care provider if you or your child (if your child is receiving this vaccine) have/has an allergy to any vaccine or latex or to eggs.

### EFFECTS

#### **Possible side effects**

- In the hours after vaccination, you may experience tenderness (10% to 64% of cases) with or without redness or swelling around the injection site.
- A few hours after vaccination, you may experience fever, discomfort, and muscle pains. These symptoms are more severe in those receiving the flu vaccine for the first time.
- In the 24 hours after vaccination, you may have bloodshot eyes, a sore throat, a cough, difficulty breathing, or facial swelling. This is called the Oculo-Respiratory Syndrome (ORS).

#### **What to do**

- Apply a cold, damp cloth to the injection site.
- Take a fever medication such as acetaminophen if your temperature is 38.5°C or over.
- Consult a health care provider depending on the seriousness of symptoms.

It is possible that there may be a very low risk (1 per million doses) of developing Guillain-Barré Syndrome (GBS) after receiving the flu vaccine. This syndrome causes progressive and reversible paralysis, but may sometimes have lasting effects. The cause of GBS is unknown. Most cases occur following an intestinal or respiratory infection, especially in young adults and seniors.

Severe allergic reactions are rare.

Should a severe allergic reaction occur, it would begin immediately and the person who gave the vaccine will be able to treat it. That's why you should stay on site for at least 15 minutes after the vaccination.

For more information, ask the person who gave you the vaccine or another health care provider.