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Wissen, was schützt.

Flu Vaccination

Protect yourself.

Annual vaccination for people aged over 60.





Flu is not a cold

Even though the symptoms are similar at first glance, and colloquially a simple cold is often referred to as “flu”, influenza is a much more serious disease than a cold.

GOOD TO
KNOW

Flu is caused by so-called influenza viruses and lasts at least five to seven days, but can be accompanied by much more severe symptoms and lead to complications and secondary diseases. **At an older age, the risk of a severe course of the flu increases significantly.**



Typical flu symptoms:

- Sudden onset of illness with a fever (≥ 38.5 °C)
- Dry, tickly cough
- Headache, sore throat, aching muscles and limbs
- Fatigue and sometimes nausea/vomiting
- Sweats

These typical symptoms occur in about one third of cases. A flu infection may cause complications, such as pneumonia or myocarditis. If these kinds of symptoms occur, you should see your doctor immediately.



Speak with your doctor if you have been vaccinated and yet still experience these symptoms. Vaccines are not always as effective as they could be – due to a weakened immune system, for instance.

Prepared for the flu season: Risk factors, complications and secondary diseases

As a person grows older, their immune system becomes less efficient. It is also possible for underlying health conditions in the respiratory tract (e.g. asthma), metabolic disorders (e.g. diabetes) and other conditions to adversely affect the course of infectious diseases.

An older person's immune system often struggles to fight off an infection. Hence they are at greater risk of a bout of seasonal flu (influenza) that is more severe, longer in duration, and potentially accompanied by severe, even life-threatening complications, such as pneumonia. It can even prove fatal.

Influenza causes inflammatory processes in the body. There is evidence that this can promote heart attacks or strokes in the presence of other risk factors. This risk as a result of influenza can be reduced by the flu vaccination.

For this reason, it is especially important that older people and people with chronic illnesses are vaccinated against seasonal flu every autumn.

Vaccination can prevent influenza infections and especially severe disease. It does not protect against harmless colds.

In addition, people aged 60 and over are at increased risk of severe disease if they have Covid-19 and so they should generally have a booster jab in the autumn each year. The flu jab and coronavirus jab can be administered at the same time. Vaccine reactions are slightly more common where the two jabs are given at the same time rather than at separate times.

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In addition to the annual **flu jab and coronavirus jab** in autumn, a vaccination against **pneumococcus**, which is a common pathogen of pneumonia, and a **shingles** vaccination are recommended for people aged 60 and over.

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Flu jabs

Vaccines against seasonal flu have existed for many years. They have been tested in numerous studies, and their effectiveness has been proven in millions of cases. Since the flu viruses can change every year, vaccines are adjusted each year to provide the best possible protection.

Seasonal flu vaccines contain parts of those virus strains that are most likely to occur with the highest incidence in the coming season.

The immune system becomes less efficient as we age, so the vaccination can be less effective than it is in younger adults. In order to boost its efficacy, the Standing Committee on Vaccination (STIKO) recommends a high-dose vaccine for those aged 60 and over. In addition, an enhanced (adjuvanted) vaccine has been approved for older people.

As influenza is a common, potentially serious disease, even a slight increase in vaccine efficacy can prevent a significant number of flu infections and serious cases.

**GOOD TO
KNOW**

Flu vaccination cannot cause influenza. The vaccine does not contain any pathogens that can reproduce.

A flu vaccine offers no protection against the common cold.



Possible side effects

The flu vaccine is well tolerated. Since the vaccine stimulates the body's natural defences, reddening or swelling at the site of the injection can occur in some cases and this area may be slightly painful or sensitive. These local reactions are slightly more common with high-dose and enhanced (adjuvanted) vaccines than they are with standard vaccines.

Other possible side effects are an increase in body temperature and mild general discomfort, such as a feeling of nausea. Such symptoms usually disappear again after a few days without consequences.

**GOOD TO
KNOW**

Serious side effects, such as an immediate allergic reaction, only occur in extremely rare cases.

How to get vaccinated:

When?

It is best to get the jab in good time before the flu season starts (i.e. from October to mid-December), as it can take up to two weeks for the level of immune protection to peak. That said, getting vaccinated later on can still be worthwhile if you have missed this time frame.

Get vaccinated once a year!

A single vaccination offers enough protection for one flu season. However, the vaccination should be given each year, with a new vaccine to protect against the new influenza viruses which are predicted to be the most prevalent. This will ensure that you are prepared for the current flu season each year.



A slight fever below 38.5 °C does not prevent you from getting the flu jab. If you have an acute illness requiring treatment, you should put off getting vaccinated until you have recovered.

Where?

Flu vaccinations are generally given in general medical, internal medical or women's health practices. Some health authorities, pharmacies or employers also offer this vaccination.

How much does it cost?

Health insurance companies bear the cost of flu vaccinations for all people over the age of 60 and the risk groups named below.

Hygiene as a protective measure

Flu viruses are highly infectious. The annual flu jab provides the most effective protection. Simple hygiene measures can reduce the risk of infection further. They will protect you and those around you from infection not only from flu but also from other infectious diseases (e.g. gastrointestinal infections).



Hygiene tips

- ▶ Wash your hands several times a day with soap (e.g. when you come in from outdoors, after going to the toilet, and before preparing and eating meals).
- ▶ Do not cough and sneeze into your hands. Instead, use the crook of your arm or a tissue.
- ▶ Use paper tissues and dispose of them after a single use.
- ▶ People with flu should not get any closer than about two metres away from people who are at increased risk.
- ▶ Masks provide additional protection.

Who should be vaccinated against flu?

The Standing Committee on Vaccination (STIKO) recommends vaccination against flu for the following groups of people:

- People aged 60 years or older

- Residents of retirement homes or nursing homes

- Children, adolescents and adults with an increased risk to their health as a result of an underlying illness, such as:
 - Chronic respiratory disorders
 - Heart or cardiovascular disorders
 - Liver or kidney disorders
 - Metabolic disorders such as diabetes
 - Chronic neurological conditions such as multiple sclerosis
 - Congenital or acquired immune deficiencies
 - HIV

- Pregnant women
- Medical staff
- Staff in facilities that have frequent contact with the general public
- People who may present a potential source of infection to others for whom they are caring or with whom they are living in the same household.



You can find further information

on the following websites:

- www.impfen-info.de/grippeimpfung
- www.infektionsschutz.de
- www.rki.de/influenza-impfung

Imprint

Publisher: Bundeszentrale für gesundheitliche Aufklärung (BZgA),
50819 Cologne, Germany

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Developed in cooperation with the Robert Koch Institute.

Design: dotfly GmbH, Cologne, Germany

Last updated: May 2024

Article number: D81000216

Cover image: © Geber86 | Getty Images

Is a flu jab
recommended
for me?

You can check here:



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