

FLU

# FLU VACCINE – 2019/2020 SEASON



**EVERYONE** over the age of six months should every season, with rare exceptions, be vaccinated against the flu. Vaccination is particularly important for people who are at high risk of serious complications from influenza.

Sinus and ear infections are examples of moderate flu complications, while pneumonia is a serious flu complication that can result from either an influenza virus infection alone or from co-infection of the flu virus and bacteria.

Other possible serious complications triggered by flu can include inflammation of the heart (myocarditis), brain (encephalitis) or muscle (myositis, rhabdomyolysis), and multi-organ failure (for example, respiratory and kidney failure).

A flu virus infection of the respiratory tract can trigger an extreme inflammatory response in the body and can lead to sepsis, the body's life-threatening response to infection.

Flu can also make chronic medical problems worse. For example, people who suffer from asthma may experience asthma attacks when they have flu, and one with a chronic heart disease may experience a worsening of this condition triggered by flu.

Anyone can get sick with flu (even healthy people), and serious problems related to flu can occur at any age, but some people are at high

risk of developing serious flu-related complications. These include people aged 65 and over, people of any age suffering from certain chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes or heart disease), pregnant women and children under

five years of age, particularly those younger than two.

The flu vaccination has important benefits. It can reduce symptoms, doctors' visits, and absence from work or school, as well as prevent flu-related hospitalisations. The flu vaccine

has also been shown to be lifesaving in children.

Different flu vaccines are available for different groups of people. There are flu vaccines available for children as young as six months and others for adults aged 65 and older. Flu

vaccines are recommended for pregnant women and people with certain chronic health conditions.

The nasal spray flu vaccine is available for non-pregnant individuals, from the age of two through 49. People with certain medical conditions should not be given the nasal spray flu vaccine: children younger than two; adults over the age of 50; pregnant women; people with a history of severe allergic reaction to any component of the vaccine or to a previous dose of any influenza vaccine; children from the age of two to 17 who are on medication containing aspirin or salicylate; people with weakened immune systems (immunosuppression); children from the age of two to four who suffer from asthma or who have had a

history of wheezing in the past 12 months; people who have taken influenza antiviral drugs within the previous 48 hours; and people who care for severely immunocompromised persons who require a protected environment (or must otherwise avoid contact with these patients for seven days after the administration of the nasal spray vaccine).

There are many vaccine options to choose from, but the most important thing is for everyone from the age of six months to get a flu vaccine each year.

If you have questions on which vaccine is best for you, talk to your doctor or other healthcare professional.

Article supplied by the Hospital Particular do Algarve Group, with hospitals in Alvor and Gambelas (Faro)

## DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FLU AND COLD SYMPTOMS

| SYMPTOMS                | COLDS                           | INFLUENZA (FLU)       |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Onset of Symptom        | Gradual                         | Abrupt                |
| Fever                   | Rare                            | Usual; lasts 3-4 days |
| Aches                   | Slight                          | Usual; often severe   |
| Chills                  | Uncommon                        | Fairly common         |
| Fatigue, weakness       | Sometimes                       | Usual                 |
| Sneezing                | Common                          | Sometimes             |
| Chest discomfort, cough | Mild to moderate; hacking cough | Common; can be severe |
| Stuffy nose             | Common                          | Sometimes             |
| Sore throat             | Common                          | Sometimes             |
| Headache                | Rare                            | Common                |

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