

Common questions people have about Flu Vaccination...

Q. If I receive an influenza vaccine, how long does the protection last?

Protection against influenza strains in the vaccine lasts for one year.

Q. How long does it take for the vaccine to work?

The vaccine takes approximately 10–14 days to provide protection. It is recommended that the vaccine is given in March – May, before the influenza transmission season begins.

Q. Why should I have an influenza vaccination every year?

The changing nature of the influenza virus means that new strains are constantly appearing. Each year a new influenza vaccine is developed to protect against the predominant strains circulating in that particular year. The World Health Organisation (WHO) devotes significant resources to maintaining global surveillance on dominant influenza strains each year in the Northern and Southern hemispheres.

Q. Does influenza vaccination work and is it the same flu vaccine that I would receive if I went to my GP?

YES the vaccine does work. It is up to 90% effective in healthy adults. Influenza vaccination reduces hospitalisation and deaths by 20% to 50%. The flu vaccine that you receive from Onsite Health is the same flu vaccine you would receive if you went to your GP.

Q. Will having the seasonal influenza vaccine protect me from getting “swine flu” (see next page for more detail)?

YES the 2010 vaccine contains an A/California/7/2009 (H1N1) - like virus strain that covers pandemic (H1N1) 2009 “swine flu” virus.

Q. What strains does this year’s influenza vaccine protect me from?

The antigen composition and strains for the approaching influenza season are determined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Commission of the European Community. This year Fluvax® and Vaxigrip® contain the following strains:

- ~ an A/California/7/2009 (H1N1) - like virus (covering the pandemic (H1N1) 2009 “swine flu” virus);
- ~ an A/Perth/16/2009 (H3N2) - like virus;
- ~ a B/Brisbane /60/2008 - like virus.

Q. Can you get influenza from having the vaccine?

NO. Influenza vaccines do not contain the whole virus, only the part of the virus that triggers your body to produce antibodies.

Q. Will the influenza vaccine protect you against the common cold?

NO. The vaccine will only provide protection against the strains of influenza virus present in the vaccine.

Q. Will an anti-viral prevent me developing influenza?

NO. Antivirals will only help relieve symptoms but not prevent infection from the influenza virus. The best protection is still vaccination.

Q. Are there any side effects?

Pain and tenderness around the injection site are the most frequent side effects, but, in general, occur in only a small number of clients.

Q. Can anyone have the vaccine?

NO. People who are known to be allergic to egg protein (including chicken meat, chicken feathers & eggs) should not have the vaccine as trace amounts of egg protein may remain in the vaccine. If you have a temperature before vaccination, or have had a previous reaction to a vaccine, please talk with the vaccinator.

Q. I’m pregnant, can I have the vaccine?

Consultation with your doctor is strongly recommended before having the vaccine.

Q. I don’t need an influenza vaccination - I’m too healthy.

Healthy individuals are still at risk of influenza and may have symptoms for up to 10 days.

Q. Who supplies the flu vaccine?

PHARMAC has the contract to source supply from flu vaccine manufacturers. Fluvax® and Vaxigrip® are the two seasonal influenza vaccines that will be available for the 2010 season. Onsite Health has little control over which vaccine that we receive from the distributors.

Fluvax® is produced by CSL Australia who are the only vaccine manufacturers in the Southern Hemisphere. New Zealand also has a formal arrangement with CSL Australia for the supply of 8 million doses of pandemic vaccine once it is developed.

Vaxigrip® is manufactured by Sanofi Pasteur in France. Vaxigrip® is distributed in New Zealand by Merck, Sharp and Dohme. Sanofi Pasteur is one of the world’s largest pharmaceutical company’s and produces approximately 1.4 billion doses of vaccine yearly, of which 120 million doses are influenza vaccine. Sanofi Pasteur has 70 – 80% market share of the Southern Hemisphere public market in flu vaccinations.

In Summary...

There are obvious advantages to influenza vaccination:

- ~ **less** time off work – less loss of income
- ~ **less** burden on your family, relatives and work colleagues
- ~ **less** strain on medical resources
- ~ **reduced** absenteeism at work
- ~ **YOU** don’t feel miserable!

Common questions about H1N1, “swine flu” vaccination...

Q. Why is the Ministry of Health concerned about pandemic H1N1, “swine flu” influenza again in 2010?

The Ministry of Health believes that based on last year’s Northern Hemisphere experience, pandemic influenza may occur earlier than usual influenza in 2010; and may in fact start in early autumn, leading to a peak in mid autumn.

The Ministry of Health believes that there is a risk that a second wave of the H1N1 pandemic – which historical data suggests will be more severe than the first wave – may arrive before flu vaccine protection is in place.

Q. Who can receive the free 2 dose H1N1, “swine flu” only vaccine provided by the Ministry of Health?

In 2010, the Ministry of Health is targeting a monovalent (i.e. single strain) H1N1, “swine flu” vaccine to ‘at risk individuals’ - e.g. health-care workers, morbidly obese, pregnant women, under 5 years of age, those with respiratory conditions etc - through GP surgeries from February 2010.

The monovalent vaccine requires 2 doses (approx.) 3 weeks apart to provide H1N1, “swine flu” protection. In addition, individuals who fall into the above ‘at risk’ categories are also recommended to receive the single dose seasonal flu vaccine when this becomes available.

Q. Will the single dose seasonal flu vaccine - as used by Onsite Health - protect me from H1N1, “swine flu”?

Yes. The single dose 2010 seasonal flu vaccine that Onsite Health’s nurses will administer in the workplace to what are known as ‘healthy working adults’ - i.e. individuals in the workplace - contains the following flu vaccine strains:

- ~ an A/California/7/2009 (H1N1) - like virus (covering the pandemic (H1N1) 2009 “swine flu” virus);
- ~ an A/Perth/16/2009 (H3N2) - like virus;
- ~ a B/Brisbane /60/2008 - like virus.

This means that the H1N1 strain in the 2010 seasonal flu vaccine is the same H1N1 strain that caused 2009’s H1N1, “swine flu” pandemic. The H1N1 strain in the seasonal flu vaccine is one of 3 strains – in addition to two other seasonal flu strains that are expected to be in circulation in 2010 - that are in the single dose 2010 seasonal flu vaccine that Onsite Health will be administering in 2010. Therefore, if individuals receive the single dose 2010 seasonal flu vaccine (that contains the H1N1 strain), individuals will receive protection from the virus that caused 2009’s H1N1, “swine flu” pandemic - assuming that there is no change in the 2009 H1N1 “swine flu” virus.