



vaccinations onsite

Q: WHAT IS INFLUENZA (FLU) AND HOW IS IT CAUSED?

Influenza is a highly contagious disease caused by a virus. Influenza viruses infect the respiratory tract. When someone who has influenza coughs, sneezes, or even talks, the influenza virus is expelled into the air and can be inhaled by anyone close by.

Q: WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF INFLUENZA?

Influenza is a contagious respiratory viral illness. Influenza A and B are the major types of influenza viruses that cause human disease and affect people of any ages. Persons with influenza may experience fever, cough, sore throat, fatigue, muscle aches, headaches, runny nose, and watery eyes. Children may also experience vomiting and diarrhoea. Although the fever and body aches usually last for 3-5 days, a cough and fatigue may persist for 2 weeks or more.

Q: HOW LONG IS A PERSON WITH INFLUENZA CONTAGIOUS?

The period between infection and onset of symptoms (incubation period) for influenza is 1-4 days. A person with influenza may be contagious 1 day before symptoms begin through to approximately 5 days after illness onset. Children may be contagious for 10 days or more. This means people could be infecting others with the influenza virus without their knowledge.

Q: HOW CAN INFLUENZA AND ITS COMPLICATIONS BE PREVENTED?

Influenza can be prevented with a high degree of success when a person receives the current influenza vaccine. This vaccine is made each year and is prepared to protect against a combination of the three mainly anticipated flu viruses.

Q: IS THE INFLUENZA VACCINE SAFE?

The vaccine does not cause influenza. It is biologically impossible as it does not contain "live virus". Generally, people have no reaction to the vaccine. Some people may experience mild side effects such as tenderness and redness at the injection site. This usually clears within a day. A cold compress applied around the injection site should offer some relief. Persons with allergies to eggs or chicken products should not receive influenza vaccine, as it is prepared from influenza viruses grown in eggs.

Q: HOW EFFECTIVE IS INFLUENZA VACCINE?

In years in which there is a good match between the vaccine virus and the virus strain causing illness, influenza vaccine is generally considered to be 70%-90% effective in preventing influenza illness in healthy adults. It is worth being aware that it takes about 2 weeks after influenza vaccination for a person to develop protection against influenza infection. Also, influenza vaccine does not protect against respiratory illness caused by other viruses.

Q: CAN YOU GET INFLUENZA FROM A VACCINATION?

No, as previously mentioned it is absolutely impossible to get influenza from the vaccine. The viruses in the vaccine are inactivated and incapable of causing influenza. Actually, the person is protected from influenza by antibodies that are formed by the immune system's response to the vaccine. The amount of antibodies in the body is greatest 1 or 2 months after vaccination and then gradually declines. For that reason and because the influenza viruses usually change each year, a high-risk person should be vaccinated between the months of March and May with the new vaccine.

Q: WHICH STRAINS HAVE BEEN INCLUDED IN THIS YEAR'S VACCINE FOR AUSTRALIA?

The Australian vaccine for the year 2010* contains:

A/California / 7 / 2009 (H1N1) - like virus

A/Perth / 16 / 2009 (H3N2) - like virus

B/Brisbane / 60 / 2008 - like virus

As Approved by the WHO and the Australian Influenza Vaccine Committee

Q: IS INFLUENZA CONSIDERED SERIOUS?

For most healthy adults and children, influenza is typically a moderately severe illness. You could expect to be unwell for up to a week. But for others who are not well to begin with, influenza can be very severe and even fatal. Symptoms have a greater impact on this group of people, in addition, complications can occur. Most of these complications are bacterial infections because the body can be severely weakened by influenza such that its defenses against bacteria are low.

Q: WHO GETS INFLUENZA?

Anyone can get influenza. People who are not well to begin with are particularly susceptible to the complications that can follow. For anyone in a high risk category, influenza is a very serious and potentially fatal illness. You may be at high risk if:

- you are over 65 years old or have:
- Chronic disorders of the pulmonary or circulatory systems
- Congenital heart disease
- Cystic Fibrosis
- Severe asthma
- Diabetes mellitus
- Chronic metabolic disorders
- Renal dysfunction

Q: IS THE INFLUENZA VACCINE SAFE FOR PREGNANT WOMEN?

It is recommended that influenza vaccination be offered in advance to women planning pregnancy, and to pregnant women who will be in the second or third trimester during the Influenza season, including those in their first trimester at the time of vaccination. Influenza vaccination is estimated to prevent 1 to 2 hospitalisations per 1000 women vaccinated during their second or third trimester.

(Australian Immunisation Handbook. 9th Edition page 193,194)

Q: CAN YOU HAVE A RECURRENCE OF INFLUENZA?

A person can have influenza more than once. Here's why: The virus that causes influenza may mutate, that is change. The virus may belong to one of three different influenza virus families, A, B or C. Influenza A and influenza B are the major families. Within each influenza virus family are many viral strains, like so many brothers and sisters. Both A and B have strains that cause illnesses of varying severity. If you have influenza, your body responds by developing antibodies. The following year a new strain, either from the same or different influenza virus family, may appear. Your antibodies are less effective or ineffective against this unfamiliar strain. If you are exposed to it, you may come down with influenza again.

Source: World Health Organisation, The Australian Influenza Specialist Group, National Health & Medical Research Council (NHMRC) Guidelines.

To arrange for Vaccinations Onsite to visit your workplace and conduct an Influenza Vaccination session please contact info@vaccinationsite.com.au or 03 8648 6550 or visit www.vaccinationsite.com.au