

Employee Information Leaflet

What is flu?

Influenza (flu) is an illness caused by the flu virus. There are different strains of flu virus. Flu is passed from person to person through droplets created when someone with the infection sneezes or coughs. You can also catch it by touching a surface where the virus has been deposited.

Symptoms of Flu usually come on much more quickly than a cold, and symptoms include:

- sudden fever of 38-40°C (100-104°F)
- muscle aches and pains
- sweating
- feeling exhausted and needing to lie down
- dry, chesty cough
- sneezing

Flu usually lasts for between two and seven days. Most people recover fully. Complications such as a chest infection or pneumonia develop sometimes.

Immunisation against Flu:

- Flu immunisation (the flu jab) gives excellent protection against seasonal flu and lasts for one year. If 10 people have the flu jab, it will provide protection from flu for 7 or 8 of them.
- The immunisation is normally given in the Autumn each year. It is made from the strain of flu virus that is expected in the coming winter. Each year this is slightly different, so a new jab needs to be made every year. You need a yearly jab to stay protected.
- Flu jabs do not prevent other viral infections which can cause coughs, colds and flu-like illnesses. It protects only against the particular flu virus that is expected in the coming winter.
- The immunisation does not actually contain any living flu virus. This means that it cannot *cause* flu or any other infections. If you develop a cough or cold shortly after having a flu immunisation it is a coincidence.

Are there any side-effects from the seasonal Flu Jab?

Immunisation against the seasonal influenza virus usually causes no problems. You may have a temporary mild soreness at the injection site. Sometimes, it can cause a mild fever and slight muscle aches for a day or so. This soon settles and does not lead to flu or other problems.

Serious reactions have been reported but are rare. For example, a severe allergic reaction, inflammation of nerves and inflammation of the brain are very rare reactions.

Is there any reason why I shouldn't have the flu vaccine?

If you have had a confirmed anaphylactic (severe allergic) reaction to the flu vaccine in the past or any component of it then you would not be able to receive the vaccine.

If you have had a confirmed anaphylactic reaction to egg products, as the vaccine is prepared in hens' eggs.*

The flu vaccination may be postponed in the event of an acute illness, but minor illness without a temperature should not be a reason for delay.