

VACCINATION AGAINST SEASONAL INFLUENZA DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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The flu season begins. Now is the time to think about vaccination. Vaccination protects against influenza and reduces its complications. The flu, not to be confused with a cold, is an infection of the respiratory tract, which is associated with high fever, chills, muscle and back pain and headaches. The symptoms of seasonal flu are very similar to those of COVID-19.

The flu is particularly dangerous because of the complications it can cause. These complications are mainly pneumonia, which is more common among older people and people who are more exposed to infections due to certain previous illnesses. During the flu season, both the number of hospitalizations and deaths due to pneumonia increase significantly. Moreover, simultaneous infection with both the seasonal influenza virus and SARS-CoV-2 can increase the risk of complications. Influenza vaccination reduces the risk of complications.

WHO SHOULD BE VACCINATED AGAINST SEASONAL INFLUENZA?

1. Groups of people with increased risk

- a) persons over 65 years of age,
- b) adults and children with chronic lung or cardiovascular diseases (including children with bronchial asthma),
- c) adults and children with chronic metabolic or kidney diseases (e.g. diabetes or dialysis patients),
- d) adults and children whose natural defences have been damaged by a previous illness (e.g. HIV infection) or medical treatment (e.g. with high doses of cortisone) are weakened,
- e) adults and children suffering from sickle cell anaemia or other haemoglobinopathy,
- f) adults and children who have impaired respiratory function and coughing up respiratory secretions or patients with impairments of the swallowing reflex and aspiration risk (mental retardation, spinal cord damage, epilepsy, neuromuscular diseases),
- g) children with diseases that require permanent treatment with salicylates (e.g. Kawasaki, rheumatic diseases),
- h) pregnant women,
- i) premature babies,
- j) Residents of retirement and nursing homes,
- k) doctors, nurses and other health professionals in direct contact with patients.

2. Groups of people who can transmit the flu to persons with an increased risk of complications

- a) employees of residential and retirement homes,
- b) people at risk in the household,
- c) doctors, nurses and other health professionals in direct contact with patients,
- d) employees of nurseries and people looking after young children up to 2 years of age, including parents and siblings

3. Groups of people who should be vaccinated for socio-economic reasons

Example: teachers, bus drivers, doctors, nurses, etc.

The "Conseil Supérieur des Maladies Infectieuses" advises all persons, including those who do not belong to the above-mentioned groups, to protect themselves against seasonal flu and its complications.

DATE OF VACCINATION

The most favourable time for seasonal flu vaccination is the period from the beginning of October. The vaccination consists of a single injection, but must be renewed every year (for children at risk under 9 years of age, 2 injections at intervals of one month are recommended). **The vaccines are available only on prescription and can be bought in pharmacies. For the groups of people at increased risk, category 1 a) - h), the cost of the vaccine is covered by the national health insurance fund.**

