



# Are you also registering for the flu vaccine?

You can play an important role with  
the prevention of a flu wave  
within your organisation!

## ***Questions and answers on influenza (flu) and the flu vaccine***

### **What is a cold?**

A cold is no flu. A cold is a virus infection with a mild course and normally without complications. The complaints with a cold could be: a running nose, throat ache, coughing, slightly raised temperature, sometimes feeling sick, head ache and muscle ache. Sometimes this is incorrectly referred to as a 'little flu'.

### **What is flu (influenza)?**

Real influenza does appear much less often than a cold and differs, among others, in the sudden arising of the symptoms such as high fever ( $>38^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) in combination with shivers, muscle and joint aches, head ache, really feeling sick (malaise), nausea and vomiting, a dry cough, chest pain, and severe tiredness that makes you bed-bound. In case of a real flu serious complications such as pneumonia, otitis media, inflammation of the heart muscle or neurological complications can occur.

### **When is there a risk of influenza?**

Yearly there are outbreaks of influenza (flu) and they normal happen in the cold season. The outbreaks of flu are usually with 1 or 2 peaks, generally between December and March. South of the equator, for example in South America, the flu season is from April till September. This should be taking into account with travellers' vaccination. Influenza (flu) is transferred by small drops and by sneezing, coughing and talking. Indirect transmission is possible through surfaces (for example door handles) that have been touched by a contaminated person. Even the shaking of a hand can transfer flu. The time between the transmission and the outbreak of the disease takes between 1-7 days. Infected people are already contagious from 2 days before till 5 days after the symptoms appear.

### **What is an influenza epidemic?**

An epidemic is a situation where many people in a country or region are infected with one and the same pathogen. Worldwide 5-20% of the population is contaminated with influenza.

### **What is pandemic flu?**

A pandemic flu is a worldwide and mass outbreak of influenza. During the 'Spanish flu' in 1918 about 50 million people died, including about 28.000 Dutch people. Further flu epidemics were, for example, in 1957 the 'Asian flu'; in 1968 the 'Hong Kong' flu; in 1977 the 'Chinese bird flu' and in 2009 the 'Mexican flu'. A pandemic flu is always with a new variance of the flu virus and is transmitted from person to person.

## **Is influenza dangerous?**

In general, a normal cold is a harmless condition, influenza however can be very dangerous. Especially people with a weak immune system, chronic illness, elderly above the age of 60 and all others that have an indication for a flu vaccine, have a higher risk on complications. But also people that do not belong to the risk group could get really ill. Each year there are still people dying from influenza and/or complication of influenza in the Netherlands.

## **Why vaccinating?**

Precaution is better than cure. It is the most cost-effective and easiest way to prevent influenza and to reduce the complication grade. Do you work in the health care branch? Then it is really desirable that you have been vaccinated! With a vaccination you do not only protect yourself but also the people around you that are at higher risk.

## **I have a healthy lifestyle, is that not enough to protect me against influenza?**

No! A healthy lifestyle has a positive influence on your resistance but it is not sufficient (and definitely with the presence of risk factors) to protect you against influenza. The most effective way to protect yourself against influenza is a flu vaccination.

## **When should you be vaccinated against influenza?**

Every year in autumn and preferable from the middle of October to the beginning of November. The protection starts after two weeks and lasts 6 to 12 months. The flu virus changes from year to year. Therefore, the composition of the flu vaccine is modified annually and you should repeat the vaccination every year.

## **How sufficient is the protection that is offered by a flu vaccination?**

If there is a good agreement between the circulating influenza virus and the predicted influenza virus that is processed in the vaccine, the flu vaccination offers protection in 90% of the cases. With elderly people and people with an immune disorder the protection grade might be lower.

## **Is it likely to suffer side-effects from the flu vaccination?**

The modern, highly purified influenza vaccinations are significantly better tolerated than the older complete virus vaccines. Local side-effects can be pain at the injection area and redness around the injection area. Overall complaints seldom occur and disappear quickly. The virus fragments of which the vaccine is made cannot cause influenza.

## **Who should/may be vaccinated with the flu jab?**

The flu jab is offered free to children and adults that have a higher risk of getting seriously ill from flu and to anyone who wants to reduce or eliminate the risk of contracting flu by means of a flu jab.

## **When should there be no vaccination against influenza?**

The vaccination against influenza should not be administered with a fever above 38°C or a serious illness. Also children below the age of 6 months should not be vaccinated. With a serious allergy against one of the component the vaccination should be reconsidered.

## **Would you like more information?**

Call us on 010 - 437 44 57 or mail to [info@griepvaccinatie.nl](mailto:info@griepvaccinatie.nl).

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