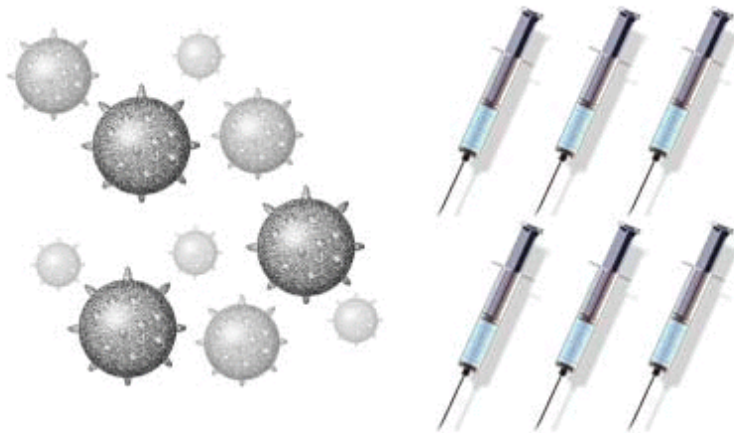


Beat the Flu Have you protected yourself?

New vaccines are developed each year to combat rapidly changing influenza viruses



ADAM.

Internet photo

How can you protect yourself?

Influenza is a common illness affecting millions of people each year. As many as 1,500 people, mostly elderly, die each year as a result of flu related complications. Hand washing may help to reduce the risk of being infected, especially after contact with persons who have the flu or contaminated surfaces, i.e. doorknobs, computer keyboards, etc. By far, the most effective way to protect yourself against influenza is yearly vaccination. In Canada, the flu season usually runs from November to April. Because the virus has the capability of changing from year to year, it is important that you get the flu shot each fall.

What are the side effects of the influenza vaccine?

The flu vaccine does not contain a live virus, so it will not cause influenza. Less than 1 out of 3 people experience side effects from the flu vaccine.

- Mild soreness at the injection site lasting 2 days or less is the most common side effect.
- Fever, fatigue and muscle aches may occur within 6 to 12 hours after vaccination and last up to 2 days.
- Severe allergic reactions are rare, but the vaccine should not be given to people who are allergic to eggs or any component of the vaccine (thimerosal, neomycin).
- A rare side effect of the vaccine, called Oculo-Respiratory Syndrome (ORS), consists of one or more of the following symptoms: red eyes, cough, sore throat, chest tightness, difficulty breathing, and swelling of the face.

- Lastly, anyone already suffering from a cold or flu should wait until they have recovered before receiving the vaccine.

If you choose not to immunize and you do get sick, remember:

Flu symptoms usually include fever, loss of appetite, muscle aches and fatigue, watery eyes, runny nose and sneezing. Nausea, vomiting and diarrhea may also occur. Most people recover fully within about 7-10 days. Influenza must run its course, but you can ease the symptoms. Get plenty of rest and fluids (water, juice, soups). Advil or related compounds such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) can relieve aches and fever in adults.

Did you know?

Flu vaccinations are especially important for people who have medical conditions such as:

- Chronic respiratory disease, heart or kidney disease
- Diabetes, anemia
- Depressed immune system due to cancer, HIV infection or other causes

So get immunized. You will not only protect yourself but those around you as well, especially if you live in a residence.

Reference: Fluviral S/F product monograph
Shire Biologicals. Fall 2003. "Don't let the flu put a chill on your happy family" brochure.