

"We'll be our lifesaver.  
We'll get the flu vaccine."



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Seirbhís Sláinte  
Níós Fearr  
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Building a  
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## *Flu Vaccine 2018-19*



Healthcare workers prevent the spread of flu and save lives every year by getting vaccinated with the flu vaccine.

Your patients, your family and those around you thank you for doing so.

The best way to protect yourself and them again this year is to get this year's vaccine.

Get the vaccine - not the flu.

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




Flu is a highly infectious viral illness of the respiratory tract that can be life threatening. Most people with flu are sick for 5-7 days with a high temperature, sore throat, muscle pains, fatigue and headache. Some people have a more serious illness which may be life-threatening. Every year in Ireland 200-500 people die from flu.

### **What are the complications of flu?**

Complications of flu include bronchitis, pneumonia, ear infections and rarely acute encephalopathy (swelling of the brain). Severe disease and death is most likely in people with chronic medical conditions and the elderly. Worldwide, flu causes between 3 and 5 million cases of severe disease each year and 250,000 to 500,000 deaths.

### **Is it a cold or the flu?**

Flu symptoms start suddenly with fever, muscle aches, headache and fatigue. A cold usually comes on gradually with a sore throat and a blocked or runny nose and is generally mild compared to the flu.





### **How is flu spread?**

Flu is spread by coughing and sneezing. Anyone with flu can be infectious from 1 day before to 3–5 days after symptoms start. This means that you can pass on the flu virus to a vulnerable patient even before you know that you are sick. If you are symptomatic please do not to visit hospitals, residential care facilities or vulnerable people.

### **Why do I need the vaccine?**

If you are healthy and get the flu you may only have a mild illness but for those at high risk, including your patients it could be fatal. Elderly and at risk patients may not get sufficient protection from the vaccine themselves so they rely on the people around them to keep them safe. Flu vaccine is recommended for healthcare workers to protect you from getting flu and to reduce transmission of flu to your family and your patients.

### **Why do I need flu vaccine every year?**

Each year the seasonal (annual) flu vaccine contains protection against three common influenza virus strains. These strains are identified by the World Health Organization as those most likely to be around this winter. The flu virus changes each year - this is why a new influenza vaccine has to be given each year.

### **How does seasonal flu vaccine work?**

Seasonal flu vaccine helps the person's immune system to produce antibodies to the flu virus. When someone who has been vaccinated comes into contact with the virus these antibodies attack the virus.

### **How long does it take the vaccine to work?**

The vaccine starts to work within two weeks.





### **How safe is flu vaccine?**

Seasonal flu vaccines have been given for more than 60 years to millions of people worldwide. Reactions are generally mild and serious side effects are very rare. The seasonal flu vaccine does not give you the flu.

### **Who should be vaccinated?**

Flu vaccine is recommended for all frontline healthcare workers including:

- Medical, nursing and paramedical staff,
- Medical and nursing students,
- Dental personnel,
- Hospital porters and cleaners,
- Ambulance personnel,
- Staff in disability and social care services especially those in residential settings,
- Carers.

The vaccine is also recommended for other groups because they are at an increased risk of developing complications from the flu.

### **Should pregnant healthcare workers be vaccinated?**

Yes. Seasonal flu vaccine is recommended for all pregnant women. This is because they are at higher risk of severe complications from flu. Flu vaccine protects pregnant women during pregnancy and provides ongoing protection to their newborn baby during their first few months of life.

If you are pregnant please read the HSE flu leaflet for pregnant women.

### **Is there anyone who cannot get flu vaccine?**

Most people can get flu vaccine.

It is not recommended for those who have:

- A history of anaphylactic reaction to a previous dose of flu vaccine or any of its constituents,
- Patients on combination checkpoint inhibitors (e.g. ipilimumab plus nivolumab), because of a significant increased incidence of immune-related adverse reactions.



### **What about people with egg allergy?**

People with egg allergy can get seasonal flu vaccine. This may be given by your occupational health unit or you may need referral to a hospital specialist.

### **When should vaccination be postponed?**

There are very few reasons why vaccination should be postponed. Vaccination should be re-scheduled if you have an acute illness with a temperature greater than 38°C.

### **Can the flu vaccine give me the flu?**

No. The vaccine does not contain any live viruses and cannot cause flu.

### **What can I expect following vaccination?**

The most common side effects will be mild and may include soreness, redness or swelling where the injection was given. Headache, fever, aches and tiredness may occur.

#### **Healthcare workers should:**

- **Protect themselves and**
- **Protect those who cannot protect themselves.**

### **How do I get vaccinated?**

Contact your line manager or occupational health department.



**For more  
information visit  
[www.hse.ie/flu](http://www.hse.ie/flu)**



Visit [www.hpra.ie](http://www.hpra.ie) or scan the QR code to read the licensed information (Patient Information Leaflet (PIL)) about the vaccine.



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