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# Stay Strong & Fight Against Flu

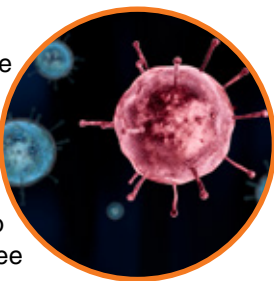
家庭醫學及  
基層醫療中心  
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## What is Flu?

Seasonal influenza is an acute illness of the respiratory tract caused by influenza viruses.

It is usually more common in periods from January to March/April and from July to August in Hong Kong. Three

types of seasonal influenza viruses are recognised to cause human infection, namely A, B and C. In the spring of 2009, influenza A (H1N1) virus emerged to cause illness in human and resulted in a pandemic in mid 2009. Influenza A (H1N1) pdm09 virus has now become one of the seasonal influenza strains worldwide.



## Transmission

Influenza viruses mainly spread through droplets when infected people cough, sneeze or talk. The infection may also spread by direct contact with the secretions of infected persons. The incubation period is usually around one to four days. Infected persons may pass the viruses to other people one day before and up to five to seven days after they develop symptoms. The period may be longer in young children or severely immunocompromised persons.

## Symptoms

Symptoms may include fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, muscle pain, fatigue and headache; some may also have vomiting and diarrhoea. Cough is often severe and prolonged but fever and other symptoms generally resolve in five to seven days. However, influenza is a serious illness to the weak and frail or elderly people, and may be complicated by bronchitis, chest infection or even death.

## Treatment

The use of medicines is for relieving symptoms. Antiviral agents may reduce severity and duration of illness but must be used under doctor's prescription. Infected persons should have adequate rest and drink plenty of water.

## Prevention

### 1. Seasonal Influenza Vaccination

Seasonal influenza vaccination can prevent seasonal influenza and its complications. Except those with known contraindications, all people aged 6 months or above should receive seasonal influenza vaccinations.

### When should I receive seasonal influenza vaccination?

The vaccine composition is updated annually in accordance with the circulating seasonal influenza strains. Therefore you should receive vaccination every year. After vaccination, the antibodies need two weeks to develop in the body and become effective against influenza virus infection.

### Who should receive seasonal influenza vaccination?

- Pregnant women
- Elderly persons staying in homes for the aged
- Long stay residents of residential care homes for the disabled
- Aged 50 or above
- With chronic diseases\*
- Medical personnel
- Children aged from 6 months to 11 (below 12)
- Poultry workers
- Pig farmers and pig-slaughtering industry personnel

\* Including patients with chronic cardiovascular diseases (except hypertension without complication), lung, metabolic or kidney diseases, obesity (BMI 30 or above), who are immunocompromised by diseases (AIDS) or treatments (cancer treatment); children or adolescents on long-term aspirin (aged from 6 months to 18); patients with chronic neurological conditions that can affect respiratory function or the handling of respiratory secretions or that can increase the risk for aspiration or those who lack self-care abilities.



## What are the differences between inactivated influenza vaccine (IIV) and live attenuated influenza vaccine (LAIV)?

The IIV contains dead virus and LAIV weakened viruses. The former is given by injection, while the latter is in nose spray form. Both are effective vaccines with different indications. Depending on individual product, most IIVs are recommended for people aged 6 months or above, including those who are healthy, pregnant and with chronic medical problems. LAIV applies to non-pregnant and non-immunocompromised people aged 2 to 49 years. Please consult your doctor for details.

### Who should not receive IIV?

- A history of severe allergy to any vaccine component or after seasonal influenza vaccination
- Fever
- Egg allergy, bleeding disorders, being on anticoagulants. Please consult your doctor for advice



### Who should not receive LAIV?

- A history of severe allergic reaction to any vaccine component or after seasonal influenza vaccination
- Children and adolescents on aspirin or salicylate-containing therapy
- Children aged from 2 to 4 and diagnosed with asthma; or had wheezing or asthma in the past 12 months

- Children and adults who are immunocompromised by any cause
- Severely immunosuppressed persons
- Pregnancy
- Use of influenza antiviral medication within previous 48 hours
- Egg allergy. Please consult your doctor for details



### Common Side Effects (IIV)

- Pain, redness and swelling at the injection site
- Fever
- Muscle pain
- Fatigue

### Rare Side Effects (IIV)

- Hives
- Swelling of lips and tongue
- Breathing difficulty
- Guillain-Barré Syndrome

### Common Side Effects (LAIV)

- Nasal congestion
- Running nose
- Fever
- Sore throat

## 2. Keep Good Personal and Environmental Hygiene

- Keep hands clean all the time
- Cover the nose and mouth while sneezing or coughing, dispose of used tissue into a lidded rubbish bin and wash hands thoroughly afterwards
- If you have respiratory symptoms, wear a surgical mask and seek medical advice immediately
- Frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected regularly with 1:99 diluted household bleach. If the surfaces are metallic, disinfect with 70% alcohol
- Use absorbent disposable towels to remove obvious contaminants, such as respiratory secretions, vomitus or excreta. The soiled surface and its surrounding areas should also be disinfected with 1:99 diluted household bleach, then left for 15 to 30 minutes, rinsed with water and kept dry. Disinfect metallic surfaces with 70% alcohol
- Maintain good air circulation



## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. How long does the vaccine take to become effective?

It becomes effective 3 weeks after Vaccination.

### 2. When should children be vaccinated? How many doses are required?

Children can receive vaccination at the age of 6 months. Two doses are required if one begins vaccination below 9 years of age. The third dose should be given 28 days after the second one.



### 3. Who can receive flu vaccine?

According to the recommendations of the Department of Health, all people, especially children, the elderly, women who are planning pregnancy or already pregnant, and high risk personnel (such as medical staff), should receive vaccination before the summer flu season.

Receiving the vaccination can even prevent related complications.

### 4. What are the common side effects?

Clinically speaking, the most common side effects are headache, fever, muscle sore or swelling or redness at the injection site.

### 5. Can I receive vaccination if I am allergic to certain food or drugs?

Vaccination is not recommended for those who are allergic to proteins contained in the related vaccine.