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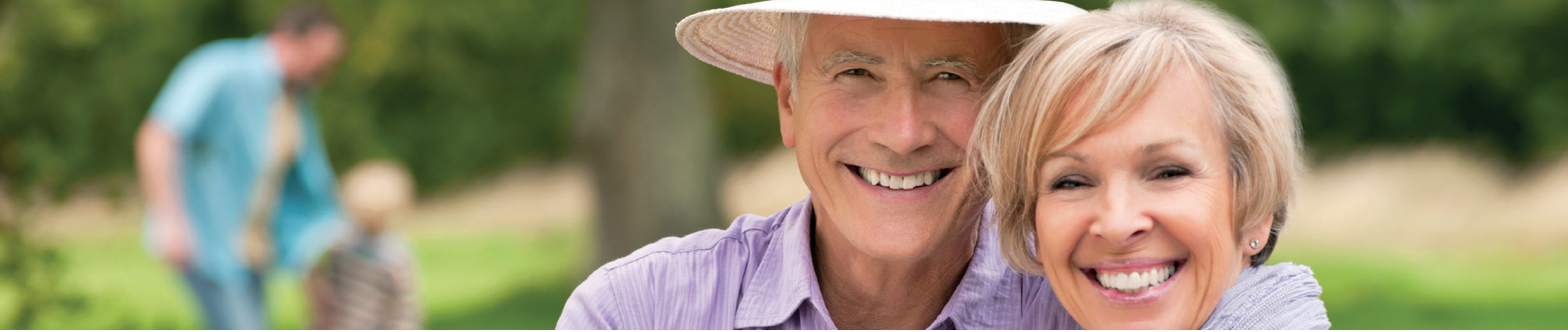
Wissen, was schützt.

Flu Vaccination

Protect yourself.

Annual vaccination for people over 60.





Flu is not a cold

What is actually seasonal flu, and what is a cold? Even if the symptoms are similar at first glance, and we might use 'flu' in everyday language to describe a head cold, flu (influenza) and the common cold (a head cold, sneezing, flu-like infection) are completely different illnesses.

GOOD TO KNOW

The flu is a much more serious disease than the common cold. Flu caused by influenza viruses lasts at least five to seven days in straightforward cases, and is accompanied by clearly more serious signs of illness.

Typical flu symptoms:

- ▶ Sudden onset of illness with fever ($\geq 38.5^{\circ}\text{C}$)
- ▶ Irritating dry cough
- ▶ Headache, sore throat, aching muscles and limbs
- ▶ Fatigue, often accompanied by nausea/vomiting

A flu infection may cause complications, such as pneumonia or myocarditis. If these kind of symptoms occur, you should see your doctor immediately.



This is also the case if they are vaccinated, as a vaccination can have a limited effect – for instance, as a result of a weakened immune system.

Armed and ready for the flu season

As a person grows older, their immune system becomes less and less efficient. In addition, existing illnesses, such as diabetes or cardiovascular problems, can have an adverse affect on the progress of infectious diseases.

This means that an older person's immune system often struggles to fight off infection. As a consequence, they are at risk of suffering from a seasonal flu (influenza) that develops more strongly, lasts longer or can be accompanied by severe, even life-threatening complications, such as pneumonia.

For this reason, it is especially vital that older people or people with chronic illnesses are vaccinated every year against seasonal flu.



Vaccination not only protects the body from harmless colds, but it can also prevent flu illnesses or prevent them from becoming more severe.

GOOD TO KNOW

At the same time, these groups of people should also be tested for vaccination protection against pneumococci, which are frequently the cause of bacterial pneumonia.

An established method still in use today: vaccination

Vaccines against seasonal flu have existed for many years. They have been tested in numerous studies, and have proved to be effective in millions of cases. As the flu virus can easily mutate, the vaccine is adapted every year to obtain the best possible protection.

Trivalent vaccines protect against the three strains of the virus, which are the most common strains expected to spread in the coming flu season. Quadrivalent vaccines have been available since the 2013/2014 season, which protect against four strains of the flu.





Important! A flu vaccination cannot induce an onset of flu. The vaccination contains no fertile pathogens.



Side effects? Virtually none!

The flu vaccine is well tolerated. Reddening or swelling at the site of the injection can occasionally occur and may also be a little painful due to the body's natural defences being stimulated.

Other possible side effects are an increase in body temperature and mild general discomfort, such as a feeling of nausea. However, this discomfort subsides after one to two days.

**GOOD TO
KNOW**

Serious side effects, such as a rash or immediate allergic reaction only occur in extremely rare cases.

How to get vaccinated

When?

Ideally, in good time before the flu season starts in October or November, as it takes two weeks for the body's immune protection to become fully active. If you have missed this period, it is still a good idea to get a vaccination at a later date.

Get vaccinated once a year!

The single vaccination offers enough protection for an entire flu season. You must be newly vaccinated every year to protect yourself from the current flu season.



A mild infection with a fever under 38.5°C is not a reason to avoid a flu vaccination.



In cases of acute illnesses requiring treatment, the vaccination should be administered two weeks after recovery at the earliest.

Where?

Flu vaccinations are generally given in general medical, internal medical or women's health practices. However, some health authorities or employers also offer this vaccination.

What is the cost?

Health insurance companies bear the cost of flu vaccinations for all people over the age of 60.

Always useful: practising good hygiene

Flu viruses are very infectious. Vaccination against flu offers the most effective form of protection. You can also lower the risk of infection with some simple hygiene measures. In this way, you can protect yourself and your loved ones from flu infections but also from further infectious illnesses (for example, gastrointestinal infections).



Hygiene tips

- ▶ Wash your hands several times a day with soap, always after going to the toilet, when coming in from outside, and before preparing meals and eating.
- ▶ Do not cough and sneeze into your hands. Instead, use the crook of your arm or a tissue.
- ▶ Use paper tissues and dispose of them after using once.
- ▶ People with flu should keep a distance of at least one metre away from people who are at increased risk.

Who should be vaccinated against flu?

The Commission for Regular Vaccinations (Ständige Impfkommission, or STIKO) especially recommends vaccination against flu for the following groups of people:

- ▶ People aged 60 years or older
- ▶ Residents of old people's homes or care homes
- ▶ Children, adolescents and adults with an increased risk to health as a result of an underlying illness, such as:
 - ▶ Chronic respiratory disorders
 - ▶ Heart or cardiovascular disorders
 - ▶ Liver or kidney disorders
 - ▶ Metabolic disorders, such as diabetes
 - ▶ Chronic neurological diseases, such as multiple sclerosis.
 - ▶ Congenital or acquired immune deficiencies
 - ▶ HIV

- ▶ Medical staff
- ▶ Personnel in organisations with frequent contact with the public
- ▶ Pregnant women
- ▶ People who present a potential source of infection for members of risk groups under their care



You can find further information

on the following websites:

- ▶ www.impfen-info.de/grippe
- ▶ www.infektionsschutz.de
- ▶ www.rki.de/impfen

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