



Bundesinstitut für
Öffentliche Gesundheit

ROBERT KOCH INSTITUT



Flu Vaccines

Effective protection for people with
underlying illnesses



infektionsschutz.de
Wissen, was schützt.

Who is the flu vaccine for?

People with certain underlying illnesses have an increased risk of experiencing severe symptoms of flu.

Vaccination against seasonal flu (influenza) has been proven to lower the risk of serious illness, hospitalisation and complications arising from the illness. It is therefore recommended that people with certain underlying illnesses are given a flu vaccination each year.

What is flu and what symptoms might you experience?

Flu (influenza) is an **infectious disease caused by flu viruses**. The terms 'flu' and 'cold' are often wrongly used interchangeably. Although it is not pleasant when you catch a cold, it is usually harmless. Flu, however, can be **severe or even life-threatening** and may result in complications such as pneumonia.

Around 2 out of 3 people develop symptoms after being infected with flu. These symptoms usually start suddenly, approximately one to two days after infection.

Typical symptoms include:

- ▶ high temperature (fever)
- ▶ dry cough
- ▶ bad headaches and aching limbs
- ▶ general sensation of being ill and tired

Every third person will not experience symptoms once they are infected, but can still infect other people.

How can you become infected with a flu virus?



Flu viruses are mainly transmitted **by droplets when coughing, sneezing or talking**. If droplets that carry the flu virus come into contact with the mucous membranes of the nose, mouth or eyes, then you can become infected.



It is also possible to transmit flu viruses on **the hands or shared surfaces**, such as door handles.

You can still catch the flu even if you have had a flu vaccine.

For which underlying illnesses is it recommended to have a flu vaccine?

People with certain underlying illnesses have a higher risk of experiencing severe or even life-threatening symptoms of flu. **The Standing Committee on Vaccination (STIKO) recommends an annual flu vaccination for people with the following underlying illnesses:**

- ▶ Diseases of the respiratory organs
- ▶ Diseases of the cardiovascular system
- ▶ Diseases of the liver or kidneys
- ▶ Metabolic diseases
- ▶ Being severely overweight (obesity)
- ▶ Diseases of the nervous system
- ▶ Weakened immune system as a result of illness or certain medications

The flu vaccine provides the best possible level of protection against severe symptoms of flu.

Why do you have to be vaccinated against flu every year?

Flu viruses are constantly changing. The **vaccines are therefore adapted each year**. The vaccines contain ingredients of the different viral variants that are most frequently and most likely to be found over the coming season. Furthermore, protection from the vaccine only lasts for a limited time. You should therefore be vaccinated every year to have the best possible protection.



There is increasing amounts of evidence to prove that flu increases the risk of cardiovascular complications. **According to studies, having a flu vaccine will help to protect against heart attacks and strokes.**

When should you get vaccinated?

The best time to get the flu vaccine is **from October to mid-December**. This means you have enough time to build up sufficient protection before the seasonal flu epidemic begins. It can also be useful to be vaccinated at a later stage.

It is also recommended that people with certain underlying illnesses are vaccinated against Covid-19 if they have not caught Covid-19 in the current year.

It is possible to be vaccinated against flu and Covid-19 at the same time.

For people with underlying illnesses, statutory health insurance generally covers the costs of the flu vaccination.

Is the flu vaccine safe?

The flu vaccine is **well tolerated and safe**. After being vaccinated, you may experience some of the usual reactions to having a vaccine, such as pain at the injection site, tiredness or a slight feeling of being ill. These symptoms usually go away after one or two days. Severe side effects are very rare.

How else can you help to protect yourself?

Having a flu vaccine means you will be well protected against severe symptoms of the illness. However, it does not offer complete protection. By following **simple hygiene measures**, you can protect both yourself and other people from flu viruses and other infectious respiratory diseases.

Important hygiene tips



Keep your distance



Pay attention to hygiene when coughing and sneezing



Thoroughly ventilate spaces on a regular basis



Wash your hands regularly as part of your everyday routine



Cover your mouth and nose with a mask if necessary



Avoid contact with others



Stay at home if you are unwell



Keep your hands away from your face

You can read more information about flu and how you can protect yourself at www.infektionsschutz.de and www.rki.de/influenza-impfung.

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Further information about the flu vaccine:

[www.infektionsschutz.de/impfen/
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