

GUILD CORPORATE VACCINATION PROGRAM



INFLUENZA - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What is influenza – ‘The Flu’?

Influenza (the flu) is a highly contagious viral infection of the respiratory tract. It spreads from person to person through the air by coughing or sneezing or by direct contact with the virus on other surfaces (e.g. people’s hands, hard surfaces). Symptoms of influenza are more severe than those of the common cold and can result in days off work and possible hospitalisation and death. Symptoms may include tiredness, high fever, chills, headache, coughing, sneezing, running nose, poor appetite and muscle aches.¹

2. Why should I get the influenza vaccine?

Annual vaccination offers effective protection against influenza. While it does not offer 100% protection, vaccination does decrease your chance of getting influenza and also reduces the severity of the symptoms if you do catch the virus.² Getting vaccinated also protects those around you, including pregnant women, babies and young children, older people and people with certain chronic health conditions.

3. Is the influenza vaccination appropriate for me?

There are very few people who are unable to receive the flu vaccination, it is important that you discuss your medical history and current medications with your pharmacist or other trusted health professional to assess whether the flu vaccination is suitable for you.

4. What strains of influenza does this influenza vaccine protect me from?

The influenza vaccination covered under the 2019 Guild Corporate Vaccination Program is a quadrivalent vaccine and provides protection against the below four strains of influenza³:

- an A/Michigan/45/2015 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus;
- an A/Switzerland/8060/2017 (H3N2)-like virus;
- a B/Colorado/06/2017-like virus (B/Victoria/2/87 lineage); and
- a B/Phuket/3073/2013-like virus (B/Yamagata/16/88 lineage).

5. Is the influenza vaccine safe?

All influenza vaccines currently available in Australia are associated with a very low incidence of side effects in adults. Vaccines, like all medicines in Australia, must pass stringent safety testing before being approved for use by the Therapeutic Goods Administration.¹

6. What are the possible side effects?

Like with any medication, some people can experience mild side effects from the vaccine. Side effects may include: pain, redness, and swelling at the injection site, low grade fever, headache or muscle aches, tiredness and generally feeling unwell. Most side effects are short-lived (6-12 hours), however, you may also experience mild influenza-like symptoms for up to 48 hours as your immune system responds to the vaccine. It is rare for a severe allergic reaction to occur.² If you feel unwell after your vaccination, please see your pharmacist or doctor.

7. How effective is the influenza vaccine?

No vaccine is 100% effective, however, there is much evidence to show that the influenza vaccine provides a good level of protection against the virus in healthy people.² The ability of the influenza vaccine to protect you depends on numerous factors such as your age and health status, as well as how similar the ingredients of the vaccine are compared to the seasonal influenza virus to which you may be exposed.^{4,5} It is important to remember that even when the viruses are not 100% matched, the vaccine can still offer protection and prevent influenza-related complications (e.g. medical complications or hospitalisation).⁵

8. Will the flu vaccination give me the flu?

No. The influenza vaccine will not give you the flu as there is no live influenza virus in the vaccine.^{1,2} If you contract the flu soon after having the vaccine, it is mostly likely you were infected before the vaccine had time to take effect.²

9. Where is the vaccination given?

The influenza vaccination is administered into the top of the arm.²

10. How long does it take for the vaccination to be effective?

The flu vaccination normally takes two to three weeks to be fully effective.



GUILD CORPORATE VACCINATION PROGRAM



INFLUENZA - FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS CONTINUED

11. When is it best to be vaccinated against influenza?

As the influenza season normally starts in June, with the peak usually falling around August, vaccinating from April allows individuals to develop immunity before transmission of influenza is commonly at its highest.¹

12. Is the influenza vaccination compulsory?

No. The influenza vaccination is not compulsory.

13. Do I need the flu vaccination every year?

Yes. Annual vaccination is recommended as immunity from influenza vaccination is not long lasting. The vaccine changes each year to protect against the most recent influenza virus strains.¹

14. I've had the flu in the past, do I still need to be vaccinated?

Yes. Vaccination is highly recommended even if you have had influenza before. There are many different strains of the influenza virus that change from year to year, so it is difficult to build immunity without a vaccination.⁶

References

1. Immunise Australia Program. Influenza (Flu) [Internet]. Canberra: Department of Health; 2018 [updated 6/11/2018; cited 23/11/2018]. Available from: <https://beta.health.gov.au/health-topics/flu-influenza>.
2. SA Health. Flu vaccine frequently asked questions [Internet]. Adelaide: Government of South Australia; 2016 [updated 31/10/2016; cited 23/11/2018]. Available from: <https://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/health+topics/health+conditions+prevention+and+treatment/immunisation/vaccines/flu+vaccine/flu+vaccine+frequently+asked+questions#When>.
3. Australian Government, Dept Health and Ageing, Therapeutic Goods Administration. AIVC recommendations for the composition of influenza vaccine for Australia in 2019 [Internet]. Available from: <https://www.tga.gov.au/aivc-recommendations-composition-influenza-vaccine-australia-2019>.
4. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. How influenza (flu) vaccines are made [Internet]. Atlanta, GA: CDC; [updated 24/9/2018; cited 23/11/2018]. Available from: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/vaccine/how-fluvaccine-made.htm>.
5. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Key facts about seasonal flu vaccine [Internet]. Atlanta, GA: CDC; [updated 6/9/2018; cited 23/11/2018]. Available from: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/keyfacts.htm>.
6. SA Health. Flu vaccine myths [Internet]. Adelaide: Government of South Australia; 2016 [updated 31/10/2016; cited 23/11/2018]. Available from: <http://www.sahealth.sa.gov.au/wps/wcm/connect/public+content/sa+health+internet/health+topics/health+conditions+prevention+and+treatment/immunisation/vaccines/flu+vaccine/flu+vaccine+myths>.

