

## Vaccine for Influenza or Flu - Shall you Take IT or Not?

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In some regions of the World, health authorities eagerly push the flu vaccine of the season onto people, while in other regions one only recommend the vaccine for special groups.

Every year one or more epidemics of influenza appear, often of new types, and usually one is offered a vaccine to prevent against the flu of the season. Here are some moments to consider before taking it.

Influenza is a contagious infection that affects the respiratory system like a cold, but also the rest of the body with symptoms like fever, fatigue, nausea, chills and aches in limbs and joints. It typically last from 7-14 days. It is usually mild, but can get serious and even deadly. The influenza virus is steadily changing, so new types of the disease often occur. The new type emerge in one part of the globe, very often in the east, and spread within months to the whole world.

There is no real good treatment for flu, but each year one is usually offered a vaccine that protects against the most prominent versions of the disease. A new type of vaccine is constructed for each new epidemic. In most countries one tries to get enough amount of vaccines ready for the beginning of the flu season in that country, in America at the beginning of October.

The vaccine is produced as shots that contains dead virus, and as nasal spray that is based on live weakened virus. People is usually unconditionally advised to take the vaccine of the season in America. In European countries one usually advises only special exposed groups to take the vaccine. The choice to take it is however not so easy, though. Here are some things to consider before accepting the vaccine.

Firstly the vaccine costs money, in some communities more than in others. This cost is usually not a big moment, but should be taken into consideration.

Even without vaccine, most people in a population really does not get sick, so in most cases the money is spoiled, and when old types reoccur, only few get sick.

The vaccine is not totally effective. Studies made at specific epidemics has shown that it is was 61% effective or less in preventing a case, depending on type of virus. Perhaps it still lessened the symptoms and duration in many cases that occurred despite the vaccine. Since it is made new for each season, the real effectiveness is also not well known when used, since it is not time for thorough tests. The vaccine also loses most of its effectiveness at late stages of the season.

The vaccine will give side effects in virtually all cases, even though some of the side effects often not called so. Most people that take the shot get irritation round the place where the shot was set, usually redness, pain and swelling that last up 48 hours. Sometimes, however, the shot gives more serious inflammatory reaction that causes great difficulty of using the limb several days.

People that take the nasal spray will at least get some mild flu symptoms a couple of days, but it can last much longer. This reaction is actually a mild influenza infection.

Not seldom will the shot give general reactions in the body that are not an influenza reaction, but still gives much of the same symptoms as a flu, like aches and fever 24-48 hours after the vaccine.

A certain percentage experience that these symptoms last some days and get as bad as a real flu. In a few cases the influenza-like reactions get serious and life-threatening, and each season a few people actually die from the side effects of the vaccine.

The vaccine usually contains substances that are known to be toxic or to cause serious allergic or auto-immune reaction. The purpose of these substances is partly to inactivate the virus, and partly to enhance the immune reaction from the body against the inactivated virus that the vaccine contains. Repeated doses of the vaccines may cause negative long term effects.

One such substance is mercury. Generally one avoid using mercury in modern vaccines, but it is still often used in vaccines against flu. Flu vaccines are for example strongly suspected to cause narcolepsy in some persons.

Since there never will be enough time to test the vaccine thoroughly, one never knows how serious the complications of the vaccine will be when it is applied for real.

Regarding the decision if one shall take the vaccine for the seasonal flu, one could think in the following manner. The general stance should be not to accept the vaccine for yourself or your children. If however some or more of the following aspects occur, the reason for taking the shot gets greater:

- One has a weak health condition so that an infection is likely to get serious.
- From experience you know that you get the flu every season without vaccine.
- One has experienced before that a flu episode gives serious symptoms.
- The flu of the season has shown to be particularly serious.
- If you have narrowed arteries, the vaccine can possibly reduce the risk of getting a heart attack triggered by influenza.
- A break from the job will cost a considerable amount of money.
- You have people around you at the job or in the family that you expect will be seriously affected by the flu if they get the virus from you.

In each season there uses to be several epidermis, some old types recurring, and often a totally new type. Usually all prevalent strains of the virus is included in the vaccine so that you get a certain protection for several types if you choose to accept the vaccine.

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