



Flu vaccine

What is Flu? It is a rapidly spreading respiratory illness caused by one of the many Influenza viruses. Common symptoms of Influenza are fever, chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches, fatigue (tiredness). Children may also have vomiting and diarrhoea.

How does Flu spread? Flu spreads when affected patients cough/sneeze or talk, thereby releasing droplets into the surroundings. One may also get the flu by touching an object with flu virus on it—like a doorknob—and then touching your own eyes, nose, or mouth.

How is Flu different from common cold? Flu and the common cold are both contagious respiratory illnesses, but they are caused by different viruses. Flu is caused by influenza viruses only, whereas the common cold can be caused by a number of different viruses, including rhinovirus, parainfluenza virus, etc. Because flu and the common cold have similar symptoms, it can be difficult to tell the difference between them based on symptoms alone. In general, flu is more severe than the common cold, and symptoms are typically more intense and begin more abruptly. Colds are usually milder than flu. People with colds are more likely to have a runny or stuffy nose than people who have flu. Colds generally do not result in serious health problems, such as pneumonia, bacterial infections, or hospitalizations. Flu can have serious associated above mentioned complications.

At which age is Flu vaccine recommended? Children older than 6 months of age can take Flu/Influenza vaccine. It is safe and recommended by Indian Academy of Pediatrics.

My child had taken Flu/Influenza vaccine last year. Why does my child still need it this year? Influenza virus undergoes a constant change (mutation). This is why the Flu vaccine is updated every year based on W.H.O guidelines. It contains those Influenza virus types which are most likely to cause infections in the ongoing year. Hence, annual vaccination is necessary to ensure protection against Flu.

Why children aged 6 months to less than 9 years of age who have never received Flu vaccine require two doses? Children aged 6 months to less than 9 years of age who have never received Flu/Influenza vaccine require two doses at least 4 weeks apart to maximize the immune response to virus strains. Children who have received Flu/Influenza vaccine in the previous seasons need only one dose in current and future seasons.

Are there any side effects of Flu/Influenza vaccines? – Flu/Influenza vaccine is generally safe. Rarely fever may occur in children.

(Edited by Dr. Sanket Kale)