

Frequently asked questions about the flu vaccine:

1. Why do I need a flu vaccine every year?

There are two reasons why it is recommended to get the flu vaccine every year

- The protection from the flu vaccine decreases over time. It is effective for usually 9 months.
- Each year the flu can be caused by different flu viruses that are not included in the previous year's vaccine. This year the flu vaccination protects against the swine flu and two new strains that developed in the Northern Hemisphere this past winter.

2. Can the vaccine give me the flu?

No.

You cannot get the flu from the vaccine, as it does not contain any live viruses.

However, some people may experience mild side effects such as muscle aches or headaches for a short time after vaccination. About 1 in 10 adults experience such symptoms. These side effects are as a result of an immune response, it is your body learning how to 'fight the flu'.

3. What are the seasonal strains for 2021?

This year's seasonal influenza vaccine will offer protection against the following strains:

- an A/Victoria/2570/2019 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus; (strain change)
- an A/Hong Kong/2671/2019 (H3N2)-like virus; (strain change)
- a B/Washington/02/2019 (B/Victoria lineage)-like virus; and
- a B/Phuket/3073/2013 (B/Yamagata lineage)-like virus.

4. How effective is the vaccine for healthy adults?

The flu vaccine is approximately 80% effective in preventing infection with influenza A and B viruses in healthy adults under 65 years of age, when there is a good match between the vaccine and circulating influenza strains

5. How long after the flu vaccine does it take for antibodies to be produced?

It takes up to two weeks for the vaccine to give full protection

6. How long does the immunisation (vaccine protection) last?

Protection should last throughout the flu season, approximately 9 months.

7. Can't I build up a natural immunity to influenza?

Immunity develops after you have been exposed to a particular strain of the virus through infection or immunisation. Influenza immunisation prepares and boosts your immune system to help you fight the influenza viruses expected to be circulating each year.

For more information visit www.fightflu.co.nz