

## SEASONAL FLU

### GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Annual flu vaccinations are recommended for everyone aged 65 or over and for anyone who is frail and at risk of complications. The flu vaccine prevents deaths and hospitalisation due to serious complications.

Vaccinating your family circle is the only way to prevent infants under 6 months of age from contracting flu, including serious strains.

Getting yourself and your children vaccinated will enable you to avoid a disease which causes, as a minimum, fever and severe fatigue, as well as a need to take several days off work or school.

### SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Flu vaccination is particularly advisable for the following groups:

- pregnant women, regardless of the stage of pregnancy. Vaccinating pregnant women also protects newborns during the first few months of their lives;
- anyone over 6 months of age with the following conditions: respiratory, cardiovascular, neurological or neuromuscular diseases, kidney or liver disease, metabolic disorders, immune disorders, blood disorders, or any long-term illness. All of these conditions are liable to be aggravated by flu;
- those in contact with infants under 6 months of age, particularly where the infants are at risk of contracting severe flu: premature babies, and infants with congenital heart conditions, congenital immune deficiency, or pulmonary, neurological or neuromuscular disorders;
- people who are overweight (BMI > 40 kg/m<sup>2</sup>);
- people in post-treatment or residential medical and social care facilities, regardless of age.

### AT WORK

Getting vaccinated against flu is a duty for healthcare professionals and anyone who works with people at risk of contracting severe flu. This prevents healthcare staff (doctors, nurses, paediatric nurses, care assistants, etc.), personal care staff (home helps, carers, childminders, etc.) and emergency workers (firefighters, paramedics, etc.) from transmitting flu to the most vulnerable.

To ensure continuity of service, it is strongly recommended that people working in the critical infrastructure sector (government, security, energy, water, telecommunications, healthcare, etc.) are vaccinated.

## **EFFECTIVENESS AND IMPACT**

Flu vaccines are effective in protecting against flu from two weeks following vaccination. The vaccine should be administered every year, in autumn, to provide protection against the subsequent winter epidemic.

The composition of the vaccine is updated every year in line with the recommendations issued by the World Health Organisation (WHO), and reflects the viruses most likely to circulate during that winter.

Mutations in the flu virus are unpredictable, which can reduce the effectiveness of the vaccine in some years. The vaccine is much more effective when the types of flu virus selected for inclusion are similar to the strains that actually circulate during the seasonal epidemic. The flu vaccine offers protection for one year because the viruses change every year. The previous year's vaccine thus offers only partial and unreliable protection for the next year. Repeated annual vaccination against different strains allows you to build up partial immunity against any new viruses that may emerge.

The flu vaccine is the most effective way of protecting the most vulnerable groups, and while it does not always prevent the disease, it reduces the risk of serious complications and death.

Side effects of the vaccine are rare and not serious (slight pain where the vaccine was administered, mild flu-like symptoms which disappear in a day or two). The vaccine cannot cause flu, since it contains only a small amount of the deactivated virus.

Vaccination only protects against the flu virus. It will not stop you from becoming infected by other viruses that are responsible for winter ailments which may resemble flu but are significantly less serious.

## **PRESCRIPTION**

The seasonal flu vaccine is available in pharmacies without a prescription. To obtain reimbursement, the vaccine must be prescribed by a general practitioner, paediatrician or specialist doctor.

The vaccine must be kept in a refrigerator between +2°C and +8°C. It must not be frozen.

It is administered by intramuscular or subcutaneous injection.

In the Principality of Monaco, health insurance providers will reimburse the full cost of this vaccine to insured persons and their dependents.

## **WHO CAN RECEIVE THE FLU VACCINE?**

Your doctor (general practitioner, specialist or paediatrician) is there to advise you and will give you the flu vaccine if you want it.

The Office of Occupational Medicine in Monaco provides vaccinations for those who require them due to the nature of their work.

### **GIVING BLOOD FOLLOWING VACCINATION**

You are allowed to give blood after receiving the flu vaccine.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TRAVELLERS**

Vaccination against flu is recommended for all those covered by the general guidelines, and especially for those going on a trip, particularly group trips or cruises.

### **DOES THE “HOMEOPATHIC VACCINE” OFFER AN ALTERNATIVE?**

This is not a vaccine (which uses antigens to stimulate the body to make specific antibodies). “Homeopathic vaccine” is therefore a misleading term. Homeopathic granules do not prevent you from getting infected with the flu virus and transmitting it to your friends and family.