

Protect yourself and others



Fact sheet for people with a chronic illness and people aged 65 and over

Prevent flu and its complications – get a flu vaccination

Do you suffer from a chronic illness? And/or are you aged 65 or over?

If so, we recommend you get vaccinated against seasonal flu as you have an increased risk of flu complications. For your protection we also recommend people close to you get vaccinated, in other words your family members and close contacts.

Flu is not always harmless. It can sometimes lead to severe complications. These may be caused by the flu virus itself or by a bacterial infection.

Common complications associated with flu are: upper respiratory tract infections, middle ear infection and pneumonia.

Other complications are less common: pleurisy (inflammation of the lining of the lungs), inflammation of the heart muscle and diseases of the nervous system including encephalitis (inflammation of the brain). Flu can also increase the likelihood of a heart attack or a stroke.

If you experience severe complications, you will have to go to hospital. Recovery may take some time. Flu can also be life-threatening.

In people with chronic illnesses, flu may in some circumstances aggravate the symptoms of the underlying disease.

Vaccination offers the best protection against flu. It must be repeated every year as flu viruses are constantly mutating and the vaccine therefore has to be adapted from one year to the next. You can have a flu vaccination at the same time as a COVID-19 vaccination or any time before or after a COVID-19 vaccination. If you need advice, talk to your doctor or pharmacist.

In which chronic illnesses is flu vaccination recommended?

Besides people aged 65 or over, flu vaccination is particularly recommended for children, adolescents and adults with the following chronic illnesses:

- chronic respiratory diseases (including asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease [COPD])
- cardiovascular diseases
- liver or kidney diseases
- metabolic disorders, e.g. diabetes
- chronic neurological disorders, e.g. Parkinson's disease
- congenital or acquired immunodeficiencies
- HIV

What about people with cancer?

Flu can be particularly dangerous for cancer sufferers. In many cases, vaccination prevents people catching flu, or causes them to experience a milder form of the virus. If you are unsure whether vaccination is right for you, or whether it may not be advisable on health grounds, please talk to your doctor.

Who covers the costs?

The costs of the vaccination are covered by the compulsory health insurance provided your deductible has already been used up.