

## Frequently asked questions about the seasonal flu vaccination

### ***When is the best time to have a flu vaccination?***

In South Africa, the best time to get your flu vaccine is before the end of April, before the flu season sets in, and before the virus spreads or as soon as the vaccine becomes available. However, if you have missed this period, the vaccine can still be taken at any time during the winter season.

### ***Where can I have a flu vaccination?***

You can get your vaccination at your GP or at your pharmacy clinic or at your workplace clinic (where available).

### ***I had a flu vaccination last year. Is this year's vaccine the same as last year's vaccine?***

Flu viruses change frequently, and when they change, the previous vaccine is no longer effective. Therefore, the content of the vaccine is changed each year, depending on the year's particular flu viruses. For full protection, a person needs to receive a dose of vaccine before the flu outbreak begins.

### ***Can everybody get a flu vaccination?***

There are certain circumstances where a person should not have a flu vaccination. This includes people who have had a severe allergic reaction to a flu vaccination in the past and people who have a severe allergy to eggs. Children younger than six months should not have a flu vaccination.

If you are unsure or have any questions, you should speak to your healthcare provider to see if you can have a flu vaccination.

### ***Does the flu vaccination prevent flu?***

Flu vaccination has been proven to be the most effective way of preventing infection and reducing hospital admissions related to flu complications. Flu vaccination continues to offer benefits when given at any time during the flu season but the ideal time for vaccination is before the season starts. It takes the body about two weeks to develop antibodies against the flu virus.

### ***Vaccination of healthcare workers***

Vaccination of healthcare workers decreases the risk of flu for patients, especially those identified as having an increased risk of flu, and is therefore recommended.

### ***Are there any side effects from having the flu vaccination?***

Side effects are usually not serious and will generally disappear on their own in a day or two. The most common side effects are mild pain, redness and swelling of the skin at the injection site. Other possible side effects include fever, feeling unwell, headaches, muscle and joint pain.