

# FLU SEASON

## The value of flu vaccines, myths and facts, and tuberculosis

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Influenza, better known as flu is a worldwide illness that may not always be thought of as a serious illness, because people often confuse the symptoms like headaches, runny nose, cough and aching muscles with a bad cold. Flu can easily be spread through coughing and sneezing and it causes respiratory infections, which can result in people becoming ill, being hospitalised and even dying. It is important to take the necessary precautions.

### Why do I need to be vaccinated every year?

Flu viruses change rapidly and last year's vaccine may not have been developed to protect you against this year's virus, which may be very different.

### Who is at high risk of getting flu and could possibly develop complications?

People 65 years or older, pregnant women and people who have chronic conditions such as asthma, bronchitis, diabetes and heart conditions fall into the higher risk category.

### Five myths and facts about the flu vaccine

Myths and facts sourced from: [World Health Organisation](#), [Dischem Pharmacy Group](#) and [Discovery Medical Scheme](#)

#### Myth

1. Flu is not serious, so you do not need a vaccine.
2. The flu vaccine can give you the flu.
3. The flu vaccine causes severe side effects.
4. The flu vaccine does not work because I still got the flu after I had the vaccine.
5. Pregnant woman should not take the flu vaccine.

#### Fact

1. The World Health Organisation reports that as many as **650 000** people worldwide and approximately **11 800** South Africans die of flu annually.
2. The flu vaccine contains an **inactivated virus** that cannot give you influenza. Feeling a bit achy or feverish after having the vaccine can be a normal reaction to the vaccine, and usually lasts only a day or two.
3. Some people could develop some side effects, but the flu vaccine has been **proven to be safe**.
4. A lot of different flu viruses circulate all the time and some people may therefore still get sick if the vaccine they had is **not specific to the strain of flu** they get.
5. Pregnant women are more at risk of contracting the flu because their immune systems are usually weaker, but the flu vaccine is **safe at any stage during pregnancy**.

## The flu virus and tuberculosis (TB)

According to the National Institutes of Communicable diseases, infection with influenza may cause TB disease to progress more quickly and alter its clinical presentation. TB patients are also part of the high-risk category developing flu complications.

### World TB Day

- **74 million** lives were saved since 2000 through global efforts to end TB
- **10.6 million** people fell ill with TB in 2021
- **1.6 million** people died of TB in 2021

### Medical scheme options for TB treatment:

Over and above government intervention, tuberculosis is a Prescribed Minimum Benefit (PMB) according to the Medical Schemes Act. As such medical schemes will cover hospital admissions where applicable. Speak to your healthcare consultant to find out more about TB and your scheme options.



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