



INFLUENZA FACT FILE

FACT 1 - Influenza is not just a cold

- ❖ Influenza is a potentially serious illness
- ❖ Influenza (commonly known as flu) is a highly contagious and potentially life-threatening disease.
- ❖ Even young and healthy people may take two weeks or more to fully recover from the illness.
- ❖ Influenza causes an estimated 1,500 - 2,500 deaths, 18,000 hospitalisations and 300,000 GP consultations annually in Australia.

FACT 2 - You may be infectious before you feel ill from influenza

- ❖ Most people may be able to infect others 1 day before symptoms develop. That means that you may be able to pass on the flu to someone else before you know you are sick.
- ❖ You are likely to remain infectious for up to 5 to 7 days after becoming sick.
- ❖ Children may pass on the virus for longer than 7 days. Some people can be infected with the flu virus but have no symptoms. During this time, those persons may still spread the virus to others.

FACT 3 - Influenza vaccine cannot cause influenza

- ❖ It does not contain any live viruses and therefore cannot cause the illness.

FACT 4 - Influenza vaccine is safe

- ❖ Influenza vaccines have been used successfully around the world for many years
- ❖ Billions of doses have been given.
- ❖ Serious adverse reactions to the influenza vaccine are rare. Most common reactions being local redness and swelling; other mild symptoms including headache, mild fever and sore muscles may occur in 1-10% of people vaccinated but are limited to 24-48 hours.

FACT 5 - Healthy people can get sick with influenza

- ❖ Being fit and healthy does not protect against influenza infection. Even healthy people should be vaccinated against influenza.

FACT 6 - It is necessary to get vaccinated against influenza every year

- ❖ The types of influenza viruses circulating in the community change from year to year, so a new vaccine has to be made each year to protect against the current strains.



- ❖ Immunity provided by the influenza vaccines declines over the course of a year, starting as early as 5 or 6 months after vaccination. It is therefore not only important to get vaccinated against influenza every year regardless of vaccine strain changes, but to also time the vaccination so that it is at its most effective when needed most (at the peak of the flu season).

FACT 7 - The annual influenza vaccine does not protect you against avian influenza, or COVID-19.

- ❖ An annual influenza vaccination is designed to protect against the strain of influenza circulating that year. The seasonal influenza vaccine is not designed to protect against avian influenza (also known as bird flu), or from the pandemic coronavirus (COVID-19).

FACT 8 - Soap and water is the best way to clean your hands

- ❖ Washing hands with soap and water is the best way to reduce the number of microbes on them in most situations. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.

FACT 9 - Stay home if you are unwell

- ❖ Staying at home when you are ill helps protect others. Here are five reasons you should stay home when you are unwell or recovering from illness:
 1. To avoid making your colleagues sick
 2. To stop the spread of illness
 3. Recover properly
 4. To avoid wasting time at work
 5. To minimize disruption for your employer

FACT 10 - Know the correct way to cough and sneeze

- ❖ Covering your nose and mouth with a thick tissue is the best way to contain your germs. If you do not have access to a tissue, you should sneeze into your elbow. And remember:
 1. Don't sneeze into your hands
 2. Wash your hands.
 3. Stay away from people.