

What you need to know about

# Influenza

Protect your patients!

Protect yourself!

Get vaccinated!

## What is influenza?

Seasonal influenza is an infectious respiratory disease caused by two types of influenza viruses - A and B. It comes every season and affects a large number of people. Influenza viruses can cause mild to severe illnesses, and occasionally lead to premature death.

**Influenza is preventable. By understanding how you can prevent influenza, you can contribute to reducing the number of cases, hospitalisations and premature deaths.**

## How is influenza transmitted?

Seasonal influenza spreads from person to person:

- by direct contact through droplets from an infected person coughing or sneezing.
- by indirect contact when droplets or secretions from nose or throat settle on surface areas such as hands or objects (like door handles). From there, the virus can be transferred to other people who then touch their face.

## What are the symptoms?

People who catch influenza often experience some or all these symptoms:

- fever
- fatigue
- sore throat
- headache
- runny nose
- muscle ache
- dry cough

However, as mild or asymptomatic infections can occur (up to 30%<sup>1</sup>), you might inadvertently infect your patients or your colleagues.

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## What can I do to protect my patients and myself?

**Vaccination is the most effective way of prevention.**

By getting vaccinated, you can help protect both your colleagues and your patients, especially those at higher risk of developing influenza-related complications.

These risk groups comprise elderly people and those with chronic medical conditions including:

- asthma and other respiratory diseases
- diabetes and other endocrine diseases
- cardiovascular diseases
- renal diseases
- liver diseases
- metabolic diseases
- neurological and neuromuscular diseases affecting respiratory functions
- suppressed immune function (congenital or acquired)

## What are the possible complications?

Complications can occur in anyone, but are more common for patients in risk groups. They can include pneumonia, ear infection, sinus infections, dehydration, and worsening of chronic medical conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma, or diabetes. In elderly people, influenza can cause and/or worsen cardiovascular and cerebrovascular conditions (heart attacks and strokes).

1. H1N1 hemagglutinin-inhibition seroprevalence in Emergency Department Health Care workers after the first wave of the 2009 influenza pandemic. *Pediatr Emerg Care.* 2011 Sep;27(9):804-7. doi: 10.1097/PEC.0b013e31822c125e.