



# Protect yourself and your patients from flu

INFORMATION FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS

Make your flu shot a part of your job

# Healthcare workers: protect yourself and your patients from flu

- If you are a healthcare worker you are at greater risk of being exposed to flu than the general population.

A systematic review in 2011 compared the incidence of influenza in healthy adults and healthcare workers. Among healthcare workers the incidence was significantly higher. Another review showed that, during an outbreak, attack rates can reach 59%. Those working in emergency departments and clinical settings are most at risk and, of all healthcare workers, nurses are most exposed to the virus.

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- Once you have flu you can pass it on to your patients, who may be especially vulnerable to complications.

Studies show that healthcare workers can transmit influenza to patients, in fact this has been cited as a principal source of infection in the healthcare setting. Flu is particularly undesirable for infants, the elderly and those with immunosuppressive and other chronic conditions. Some patients may develop life threatening complications, there have been documented cases of influenza deaths in neonatal intensive care units and paediatric oncology wards following healthcare worker transmission.

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- Because most healthcare workers are dedicated individuals, they often come to work when they are sick increasing the risk of transmission.

A survey conducted in California showed that 35% of healthcare worker developed influenza during the flu season and 77% of them cared for patients while sick. A study in Glasgow showed that 23% of healthcare workers had flu but over half did not realise that they had the virus. Being vaccinated can give you peace of mind as you are less likely to infect vulnerable patients.

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- When healthcare workers have to stay at home sick, patient care can suffer.

Staff shortages can have a negative effect on patient care. Lack of nurses in intensive care units can increase mortality. Yet despite this, vaccination rates among healthcare workers remain low.

WHO recommends that all healthcare workers are vaccinated against seasonal influenza in the autumn. For further information on vaccine safety [http://www.who.int/vaccine\\_safety/initiative/tools/Influenza\\_Vaccine\\_rates\\_information\\_sheet.pdf](http://www.who.int/vaccine_safety/initiative/tools/Influenza_Vaccine_rates_information_sheet.pdf)