

- Vaccination

Have you taken the influenza vaccine?

Hindustan Times (Lucknow) · 15 Nov 2021 · 2 · Dr Gourdas Choudhuri

Seasonal flu or influenza comes around this time of the year with symptoms of running nose, fever, headaches and cough, and affects around 5–20 % people. It is caused by influenza virus, and spreads easily from one person to another, in schools, colleges, offices or at home.

The symptoms are quite similar to Sars-Cov-2 virus but it tends to run a shorter course and is less dangerous, that is it kills less people. However, influenza (strains A and B) often causes pneumonia, and remains one of the commonest causes of death in the elderly and in children during winter months. Fortunately, there is a vaccine available to prevent seasonal flu (such as Influvac Tetra of Abbott, as well as by other manufacturers), that most vulnerable people can take around this time to protect themselves.

Health care workers such as nurses, hospital staff, doctors

School or college goers

Police and military personnel living in barracks Those travelling by public transport, or who need to visit crowded places Residents of old age homes, institutions/hostels or barracks.

Who are at most risk when it takes a serious turn if infected?

Elderly people and those above 65

Those with bad lungs

(chronic bronchitis, emphysema, asthma, smokers)

Those with co-morbidities such as heart disease, diabetes, renal disease, hypertension or other chronic diseases.

Small children especially those who are weak, have asthma or other health problems.

Why are they at increased risk?

They are more prone to develop pneumonia or severe lung infection, are not able to fight off the infection easily, and are at risk of respiratory failure or death. What should we do?

Take the flu shot. As the

Influenza virus keeps changing every year, an annual dose of vaccine made from the currently circulating strains are made every year. One dose of 0.5 ml IM is advisable in autumn or early winter.

Do not attend school, college or office if you have flu, as you may spread it to others.

Avoid people with running nose, fever or cough. Wear a mask (similar to preventing Covid), and keep your hands sanitized frequently. Keep a hanky or tissues handy.

Do not confuse with the Covid vaccine that must be taken (2 doses) by every person for protection against Sars-Cov-2 virus or Covid-19. That however does not protect against Influenza, another separate respiratory virus, which needs a separate vaccine and needs to be taken in addition.