

iTRANSFUSEFACTSHEET

all about blood

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THE FLU AND YOU

BEVERLEIGH QUESTED AND SUZANNE ROSE

What is the 'flu'?

Influenza (commonly known as "the flu") is a highly contagious and potentially deadly virus. Influenza is not the same as the common cold and even young and healthy people may get very sick with fevers, aches, breathing problems and other symptoms.

How does influenza spread?

Through the air when infected people cough or sneeze, or the virus can ride on your hand after contact with contaminated surfaces and can then easily get to your mouth or face. It is easy to catch in crowded or confined spaces such as offices, hospitals and public transport.

Can I stop it spreading?

Good cough and sneeze etiquette and good hand hygiene when you are unwell with influenza-like symptoms are key. Staying at home if you have influenza will also prevent spreading the virus.

What can I do to avoid influenza?

1. Get your annual flu vaccination. This is the best way to protect yourself.

2. Practice good personal hygiene:

- If you are unwell stay home
- Wash your hands with soap regularly
- Wipe frequently touched surfaces
- Avoid touching your mouth or nose
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your elbow (not your hands)
- Dispose of tissues into the bin immediately to minimise germ transmission.

Why do I need a new vaccination each year?

The influenza virus, like a car, comes in different brands and models. Each year there is an updated model reflecting the seasonal



influenza expected in Australia. There is occasionally a new brand too. For instance, while H1N1 ("swine flu") was around years ago, when a model of this influenza caused a pandemic in 2010 it was included in that year's vaccine.

Will I get sick from the influenza vaccine?

You cannot get the flu from the vaccine. Serious adverse reactions to the influenza vaccine are rare. Local redness and swelling can occur. Other mild symptoms include headache, mild fever and sore muscles for a day or two and may occur in 1–10% of vaccinated people. Allergic reactions may occur in people with a severe egg allergy.

Can I donate after the flu vaccine?

The flu vaccination is not a live virus vaccine so you are able to donate. Often donors wait a day or two in case of adverse reactions which may be confused with illness.

Why should Blood Service staff be vaccinated?

Annual vaccination is the single most effective measure to prevent influenza.

PACKFACT

The 1918 "Spanish Flu" pandemic killed more than 50 million people, at least four times the number of World War 1 casualties.



The more people who have the vaccination the fewer people there are to pass on the influenza virus. Influenza vaccination can reduce sickness, absenteeism and workplace disruption, so the blood service can continue to provide an adequate supply of blood.

The information contained in this fact sheet is not intended to be medical or professional advice. The disclaimer found at transfusion.com.au applies to this fact sheet.

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