

# Prevent Flu

## VACCINATION

Vaccination is available, but in limited quantity and is reserved for certain groups:

- All people over 65 years.
- Vaccination is also advisable for people with one or more of the following long-term conditions:

- Chronic (long term) respiratory disease.
- Chronic heart disease.
- Chronic kidney disease.
- Chronic liver disease.
- Chronic neurological conditions, such as Parkinson's.
- Diabetes.
- Immunosuppression (a weakened immune system).
- Sickle cell disease and coeliac syndrome.
- Morbid obesity

Vaccination is also available, and recommended for, pregnant women, those in long-stay residential homes and health care workers who are in contact with patients. Vaccination in pregnancy helps protect both mum and baby, preventing severe infection, damage to baby's development and complications such as premature birth/ stillbirth.

**If you are one of the above, visit the Primary Care Centre for vaccination.**

# Facts vs Fiction

Health professionals hear various reasons for not those choosing not to have their flu vaccine, and persistent myths are potentially life threatening-influencing the health of our community. Here we dispel some of the most common myths in view of extensive scientific research.

**Myth:** I got the flu vaccine years ago and it gave me flu!

**Fact:** The flu vaccine is an inactivated vaccine and cannot cause flu. Flu-like symptoms experienced by people who have recently received the vaccine are likely due to either the body's immune response to the vaccine, or one of many other circulating respiratory viruses.

**Myth:** You cannot catch flu if you are fit and healthy.

**Fact:** Flu is very infectious and anyone can catch flu. Flu viruses are spread by coughing, spluttering, sneezing and other ways of sharing your germs. Regular and thorough hand washing is one of the easiest ways to prevent the spread of flu. About 70% of us get the flu without symptoms, but we can pass it on to those who are not fit and healthy.

**Myth:** The flu vaccine hasn't been tested, it's not safe!

**Fact:** All vaccines, including flu vaccines, undergo stringent testing after which they are licensed for use. They have been used hundreds of millions of times. If there was an obvious issue, we would know about it



**PREVENTION  
IS BETTER THAN  
FLU**

*gha*  
Gibraltar Health Authority

*PUBLIC  
health*  
GIBRALTAR

## More Information

### ACCEPT THE FACT

Coughs, colds and sniffles are usual for this time of the year. Generally, they are short-lived and cause no lasting harm. Also, six out of seven people with symptoms have a cold, not flu.

### ANTIBIOTICS DON'T WORK

Cold and Flu are caused by viruses. **Antibiotics cannot work.** If your doctor does not prescribe antibiotics, do not be surprised and do not pressure him/her to do so. Do not try to get antibiotics from the pharmacist without a prescription. This is risky, harmful and is illegal. Overuse of antibiotics leads to the emergence of resistant germs like MRSA.

### TREAT IT YOURSELF

A visit to the doctor is probably not necessary in most cases. YOU could be wasting the time that you could spend more usefully taking rest than queuing up at the clinic.

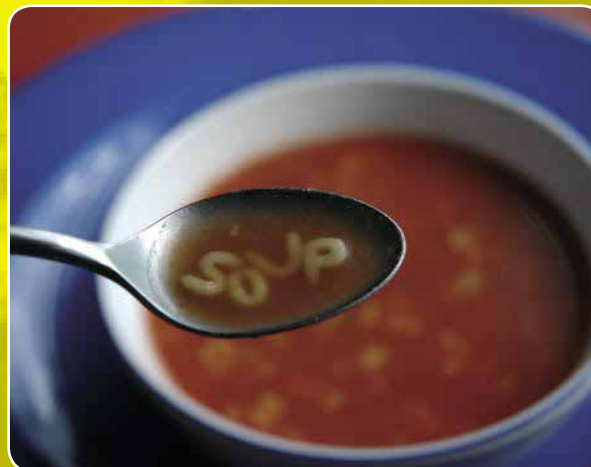
### UNDERSTAND HEALTH SERVICE PRESSURES

Many times, clinics get filled up with people who don't really need to see a doctor. If you go to see your doctor when all you have is a simple flu, you will not gain any benefit but you will be spreading the germs around.

## How to treat flu yourself

- Drink plenty of fluids. Hot drinks can have a soothing effect, if you don't feel like eating try soup.
- Take paracetamol tablets every 6-8 hours in the recommended dose for your age. This will ease your sore throat and muscle aches.
- Don't do strenuous exercise.
- To avoid spreading viruses, cover your mouth when you cough and sneeze.
- Wash your hands regularly.
- Keep your bedroom well ventilated.
- Take it easy. Ensure that you have rest. If necessary, take time off work or school for a full recovery.

\*Catch it; bin it; kill it\*



## When to see the doctor

### YOU ONLY NEED TO SEE THE DOCTOR IF:

- You have had symptoms for over a week.
- Your symptoms are very severe.
- Your breathing is difficult.
- You have other chest diseases like asthma or bronchitis.
- You are coughing up blood.
- You are coughing up large amounts of yellow or green phlegm.

## Stay Healthy

### SMOKING

Cut down smoking during the winter months. Smoking increases the chance of flu-like infections and chest infections. Better still, try to give up. We have a stop smoking service that can help.

Children have a greater chance of chest infections if they live in a house where parents smoke. Sticking your head out of the window whilst smoking does not really help.

Consider using this winter as an opportunity to give up smoking altogether.

*An elecromicroscopic image of the Influenza virus*

