

## **COVID-19 and flu: Questions & Answers**

The COVID-19 pandemic is expected to coincide with the influenza season this year. Whilst infection prevention practices have been effective in reducing the spread of viral infections in general, there are still a number of questions circulating about the influenza vaccine in relation to COVID-19 infection.

### **Does getting the flu vaccine mean the recipient is more likely to catch other viruses, such as COVID-19 afterwards?**

The best and most up-to-date data shows no increased susceptibility to COVID-19 after having the flu vaccine.

Recent Canadian research using a large number of participants, found there was no difference in the chances of getting COVID-19 between people who had received an influenza immunisation and those that had not been immunised.

The flu vaccine has been found to give good protection against influenza, and the overall likelihood of a positive test for any virus other than influenza is not increased following receiving a vaccination.

Of crucial concern is the worry that potentially serious negative consequences if people experience COVID-19 and influenza, or any other severe respiratory virus, at the same time.

### **Can you/ should you have flu vaccine post having COVID?**

There is no reason why people who have recovered from COVID-19 should not be vaccinated against flu. Based on vaccination programs currently in effect in the Southern hemisphere, there is no evidence to suggest that you reactivate or relapse with COVID-19 due to vaccine response.

### **Can having COVID-19 reduce the effectiveness of the flu vaccine?**

There is no evidence to date. In general, we do not see reduced effectiveness to a vaccine when someone is recovering from another respiratory virus. However, it is not known at this stage with COVID-19. If there is a reduced response to the influenza vaccine from someone who is recovering from COVID-19 it is still advised it is better to have the vaccine than be left at risk of catching influenza.

### **After recovering from COVID-19, how long before it is safe to receive the flu vaccine?**

Vaccination should be deferred until symptoms resolve (The World Health Organization recommend 14 days after symptom resolution).

### **Why should I vaccinate for flu as it should be a mild flu season because there is less flu in the community at present?**

Influenza virus is always circulating globally. It appears to be at lower rates outside of the winter season but is still present. We cannot predict how mild or severe a winter flu season will be any year. Because of lock-down measures and reduced community contact the rates of respiratory illness are currently quite low. However, as people start mixing more, we are expecting rates to start to rise. We cannot predict how mild or severe the winter flu season will be, and therefore vaccination remains important.