Flu jab
2015
Your doctor or GP will invite you to attend for a flu jab. This leaflet contains details about the flu jab. The best time to get a flu jab is from mid-October to mid-November. You will be given the flu jab free of charge.

**Why have you been sent an invitation to get a flu jab?**

Every winter, on average, one in ten people catch the flu. For most people, the flu is a nasty illness that goes away by itself. Flu is not the same as a bad cold. The flu can make some people seriously ill. They are in a high-risk group. You, too, are in a high-risk group. This is why you have been sent an invitation to get a flu jab.

**For whom is the flu jab intended?**

The free flu jab is intended for the following high-risk groups:

- everyone aged 60 and above;
- people with a long-term cardiovascular disease;
- people with a long-term lung disease;
- people with diabetes mellitus;
- people with a kidney disorder;
- people with poor resistance, caused by another disease, medical treatment, or medications that lower the resistance.

You can also get the flu jab if you are pregnant and belong to one of these high-risk groups. The flu jab has no disadvantages for you or your unborn child.
The flu jab reduces the risk of catching flu

When is the best time to get a flu jab?

For effective protection, you should get a flu jab every year. The best time for this is between mid-October and mid-November. Don’t wait until there is an outbreak of flu. This is because it takes two weeks for the flu jab to take effect.

The benefits of a flu jab.

- The flu jab reduces your risk of catching flu.
- However, if you do catch the flu, a flu jab will ensure that the illness is less serious:
  - The flu symptoms will often be less serious.
  - There is less risk of pneumonia and other health problems.
  - Do you suffer from a disorder such as a lung disease or diabetes? Flu often aggravates such disorders. If you do catch the flu, the flu jab makes it less likely that this will cause your disorder to worsen.
How does the flu jab work?

Flu is caused by the flu virus. Another name for flu is influenza. The flu jab gives you better immunity against the flu virus. This is because your body responds by making antibodies that attack the flu virus. After the flu jab, it takes your body two weeks to create enough antibodies to be effective. If you become infected by the flu virus after this two week period, these antibodies can render the virus harmless.

People can infect you with the flu virus by shaking your hand, for example, by coughing, sneezing, or just by talking. The flu jab only protects you against the flu virus. So it won’t protect you against other viruses, like the virus that causes colds.

The composition of the flu jab changes from year to year. Last year, the composition of the flu jab did not match the prevailing flu viruses. That does not happen very often. Even though they had received a flu jab, some people still became ill. As a result, more people were ill with the flu last year. The flu jab usually contains the correct flu viruses, and therefore protects against the flu.

Does the flu jab have any side effects?

The flu jab seldom causes any serious side effects. However, after the flu jab, your arm may be a little sensitive for a day or so. The skin round the injection site on your arm might feel sore, and may look red or swollen. You may also feel a little unwell for a few days after the flu jab. However, the flu jab itself will never give you flu.

Are you suffering from a side effect following your flu jab? If so, report it to your GP or physician, or at www.lareb.nl, the website of the Netherlands Pharmacovigilance Centre.
Why are flu jabs given every year?

The flu jab usually provides about six months’ protection. So last year’s flu jab is no longer effective. The flu virus also changes regularly. This is why you are at risk of catching flu again every year. For this reason, you need a new flu jab every year. That helps your body to make new antibodies every year.

Experts predict which flu viruses will be most common during the coming winter. The composition of the flu jab is based on their predictions. The annual flu jab protects you against the most commonly occurring flu viruses.

It is important that you get a flu jab every year.
Have you decided that you want a flu jab? If so, then this is important:

You will be given the flu jab in your upper arm. Please wear clothes that make it easy for you to expose your upper arm.

Are you allergic to egg white? If so, please consult your GP or the doctor at the care home where you are living.

Summary of the most important details

- The flu jab reduces your risk of catching flu.
- The best time to get a flu jab is from mid-October to mid-November.
- Flu is not the same as a bad cold.
- The flu jab provides about six months’ protection.
- Different flu viruses are active each year. So the composition of the flu jab also changes each year.
- You need a new flu jab each year, to get the best possible protection.
- However, the flu jab itself will never give you flu.
- You will be given the flu jab free of charge. The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport determines which groups are offered the flu jab. The Health Council of the Netherlands advises the Ministry about this.
Further details

You can find further details at: www.rivm.nl/griep
and www.thuisarts.nl/griep. You can also consult
the staff at your GP’s practice or the doctor at the
care home where you are living.
The Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport has asked the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) to direct and coordinate the National Influenza Prevention Programme. The Dutch College of General Practitioners is the scientific association of general practitioners.

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