

STOP INFLUENZA

Protect yourself and others
against swine flu
– GET VACCINATED!

Who will be vaccinated?

Vaccination in Finland will be on a voluntary basis and free of charge, according to a specific order of vaccination.

1

Frontline health and social care workers treating and caring for infected patients or patients exposed to infections, ambulance staff, and pharmacy staff attending to customers

These people are exposed to the virus through their work, and vaccinating them will also protect patients.

2

Pregnant women

Although the majority of pregnant women will experience only a mild disease, they are at a greater risk than their peers of developing a serious illness. The vaccine will protect not only the mother but also the baby during the first months of life.

3

Persons aged from 6 months to 64 years belonging to an at-risk group due to an underlying medical condition

This group includes people with a heart or lung disease requiring regular medication, a metabolic disease, chronic liver failure or chronic kidney disease, an immune system disease, a condition whose treatment reduces the immune response, or a chronic neurological or neuromuscular disease.

People belonging to an at-risk group due to an underlying condition are at greatest risk of developing a severe disease as a result of swine flu. The risk of reduced functional capacity and an exacerbation of their underlying condition is also greater.

4

Healthy children aged from 6 to 35 months

Young children have a high morbidity rate from flu, require hospital care more often than on average, and are efficient transmitters of the disease.

5

Healthy children and young people aged from 3 to 24 years as well as conscripts

Swine flu has particularly targeted children and young people between the ages of 3 and 24, causing mostly mild infections. However, some young people may develop a severe illness.

6

Persons aged 65 and over who due to an underlying medical condition belong to an at-risk group

Although morbidity from swine flu among persons aged 65 and over is lower than in other age groups, an underlying condition places them at higher risk of serious illness.

The need to vaccinate the whole population will be assessed after seeing how the swine flu situation evolves.



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What is swine flu?

Swine flu is an illness caused by a new pandemic influenza virus, the H1N1 2009 virus. The symptoms of swine flu are similar to regular seasonal influenza symptoms. The most common symptoms include a sudden fever (of 38 °C or above), a sore throat, cough and a runny nose. Other possible symptoms include body aches, headache, chills and tiredness. In some cases, the symptoms may also include diarrhoea or vomiting. Children may also experience stomach ache.

Swine flu is not the same as the seasonal flu we see every year.

Why should you take the vaccine?

Most people infected with swine flu suffer only mild symptoms, but some may also develop a more serious illness, even young and healthy people. Swine flu may also lead to complications, such as pneumonia and bronchitis, and ear infections in children.

The single best way to protect yourself against swine flu and its complications is to get vaccinated. Taking the vaccine also helps prevent the spread of the virus. The vaccine is a pandemic-specific vaccine, developed especially against the swine flu virus, which means the vaccine's effectiveness is good. It takes about two weeks for the flu vaccine to take effect and provide protection.

What are the ingredients in the vaccine?

The swine flu vaccine contains small amounts of proteins from the surface of the H1N1 2009 virus that is causing the current pandemic.

The vaccine also contains an adjuvant, a substance that improves the effectiveness of the vaccine. The adjuvant (AS03) has been approved for sale by the European Medicines Agency (EMA), after being extensively tested and proven safe and effective.

The preservative used in the vaccine is thiomersal, a mercury-containing compound. Thiomersal does not accumulate in the body but is rapidly metabolised and removed from the body. Furthermore, the mercury in the vaccine is in such small amounts that it poses no more a risk than eating fish.

Will the vaccine give me flu?

No. The vaccine does not carry a live virus, so it cannot give you flu. The swine flu vaccine only protects against swine flu. The seasonal influenza vaccine, in turn, only provides protection against seasonal influenza. Neither vaccine protects against regular flu.

Is the vaccine safe?

Yes. The most common side-effects following vaccination are redness, warmth, swelling or tenderness where the injection was given. Some people may also experience flu-like symptoms such as muscles aches, joint pains, headache and fever. These symptoms usually last only a day or two and can be treated with normal over-the-counter flu medication. The vaccine has not shown any severe side-effects.

Can everyone have the vaccine?

There are only a very few people who cannot have the swine flu vaccine. The vaccine is not suitable for people who have an anaphylactic reaction (allergic reaction) to egg or people who have had a severe allergic reaction to a previous flu vaccine dose. If you are worried that this may apply to you, check with your nurse or doctor about taking the vaccine.

People with a feverish infection should not have the vaccine.

Where do I go to get the vaccine?

The swine flu vaccine will be made available at dates and locations to be announced separately by local health centres on the internet and in newspapers.

More information

For more information, contact your local health centre, prenatal and child health clinics or school health care providers.



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