

STOP INFLUENZA

Protect yourself and
others against swine flu
– GET VACCINATED!

What is swine flu?

Swine flu is the name commonly given to the illness caused by the 2009 pandemic influenza A(H1N1) virus. The symptoms of swine flu are similar to regular seasonal influenza symptoms. The most common symptoms include a sudden fever (38 °C or above), a sore throat, cough and a runny nose. Other possible symptoms are body aches, head-ache, 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 is getting vaccinated a good idea?

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. Getting vaccinated helps stop the spread of the virus – there are still people who have not yet been infected or vaccinated.

The vaccine is ‘pandemic-specific’, that is, it has been developed especially against the current swine flu virus. This makes the vaccine more effective. It takes about two weeks for the vaccine to take effect and provide protection. It is expected that this swine flu vaccine will provide protection for several years after vaccination. It may also provide protection should the virus change.

The vaccine is worth taking even if you think that you might already have had swine flu, because the only way to be sure you have had it is if your blood was laboratory-tested. There is no harm in taking the vaccine.



NATIONAL INSTITUTE
FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE

www.thl.fi/swineflu



Why take the vaccine if the epidemic has already peaked?

Just because the epidemic appears to have passed its peak does not mean the pandemic is over. We know from previous influenza pandemics that the virus will circulate in the population and may even cause a second wave of infections. The more people that have been vaccinated, the more protection there will be against a second wave and the greater the chance of preventing it completely.

What are the ingredients in the vaccine?

The swine flu vaccine contains small amounts of proteins from the surface of the virus that is causing the current pandemic. The proteins help activate a strong immune response.

The vaccine also contains an adjuvant, a substance that improves the effectiveness of the vaccine. The adjuvant (AS03) has been 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 swine flu?

No. The vaccine does not carry a live virus, so it cannot give you swine 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 swine flu vaccine being used in Finland is safe and has been approved for sale by the European Medicines Agency (EMA).

The most common side-effects following vaccination are redness, warmth, swelling or tenderness where the injection was given. Some people may also experience headache, nausea, muscles aches, joint pains and fever. These symptoms usually last only a day or two and can be treated with normal over-the-counter flu medication.

The vaccine is not expected to cause any serious or long-term side-effects.

Can everyone have the vaccine?

Yes. 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 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, consult your nurse or doctor.

You should not have the vaccine if you have a fever. Wait until the fever is gone before getting vaccinated.

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. Those in active employment can check with their employers about getting the vaccine through their occupational health services.

For more information about vaccinations, contact your local health centre.



NATIONAL INSTITUTE
FOR HEALTH AND WELFARE