

The Flu Shot

Influenzae Vaccine

<http://Rheuminfo.com>
your rheumatology resource

Influenzae "The Flu"

What is the flu (influenzae)?



Influenza (The flu) is a respiratory infection caused by a virus. There are two common viruses that cause the flu: Influenza A and B.

When is flu season?



The flu generally occurs each year from early October to late May.

What are the symptoms of the flu?



The main symptoms of the flu include: (1) Fever, (2) Feeling really tired, and (3) muscle aches. Other symptoms can include chills, cough, loss of appetite, and a sore throat. In most adults, symptoms usually start 1 to 4 days after exposure to the virus and the flu lasts from 2-10 days. It can last longer in the elderly, children, and people with chronic illnesses

How is the flu spread?



The flu is really easy to catch. It can spread quickly from person to person. You can spread the virus even before you feel sick. You are also contagious up to 7 days after you get sick. It sometimes lasts longer for the elderly, children and people with chronic illnesses.

The flu and autoimmune disease



If they get the flu, people with autoimmune diseases like rheumatoid arthritis & lupus are more likely to have severe symptoms.

Avoiding the flu?



You can avoid the flu by:

1. Getting a flu shot every year
2. Washing your hands often
3. Using an alcohol based hand sanitizer
4. Covering your mouth or nose with a tissue when you sneeze or cough
5. Avoid touching your face
6. Keep surfaces clean and disinfected

The Flu Shot

What is the flu shot?



The flu shot contains an "inactivated" dose of the flu virus. The flu shot activates your immune system to build up its defences against the flu. This makes you stronger and more resistant to the virus. You cannot get sick from the flu shot.

How often do I need the flu shot?



The flu shot protects you for about a year. It works against the top 3 types of the virus for that year's flu season. This year's flu vaccine may be different from the year before. So it's important to get the flu shot each year.

Can I get sick from the flu shot?



Remember, the flu shot contains an "inactivated" dose of the flu virus. This "inactivated" virus cannot infect you. So the flu shot cannot cause the flu.

Is the flu shot safe?



The flu shot is very safe and research has shown that all of the ingredients in the flu shot are safe.

The flu shot & your medications



It is safe to take the flu shot with other medications including all of your arthritis medications (DMARDs & Biologics).

Who should NOT get a flu shot



There are only a few reasons not to get the flu shot:

- If you have had a previous severe reaction to the flu shot
- If you have a severe egg allergy
- If you have ever had Guillain-Barre syndrome

Who should WAIT to get a flu shot



You should wait to get your flu shot if:

- You feel unwell with a fever
- You have a new neurologic disorder (stroke).

You can get the shot when your health has improved.

Where to Get the Flu Shot



The flu shot is widely available. You can receive the flu shot from:

- Your primary care provider
- Your local pharmacy
- Your local Health Unit