

Get Shot this Winter



By BINDU GOPAL RAO

With winter approaching, there is no sign of the coronavirus abating. Doctors and experts recommend influenza shots and then pneumonia vaccine to boost immunity, though they guarantee no protection against the Covid-19 virus. Two recent studies from Italy conclude that coronavirus rates among people older than 65, who had received a flu shot, were comparatively less.

Each year, several flu vaccines come on the market. Currently seven are commercially available and recommended for clinical use in 2020-2021. Note, the vaccine you're taking must be licensed and age-specific. Trivalent vaccines (IIV, RIV4, or LAIV4), which typify the majority of vaccines this year, protect the body against three strains of viruses while quadrivalent protects against four. Flu vaccines fall into seven categories.

1. Standard dose trivalent flu shots (18-64 years)
2. High-dose trivalent shots
3. Standard dose quadrivalent flu shots (six months and older)
4. High-dose quadrivalent shots that contain four times the flu antigen

SIDE EFFECTS

Flu vaccine: Fever and cold like symptoms can be expected when given to children. Usually mild side effects like pain on the injection site, redness, swelling and low-grade fever are seen.

Pneumococcal vaccine: Injection site reaction like hardness, pain, fever, headache, rashes can emerge.

GOOD TO KNOW

- ❖ An influenza vaccine costs about ₹1,250 and the pneumonia shot is around ₹1,000-1,500 depending on the manufacturer
- ❖ Inform the doctor if you are suffering from an active infection like fever, sore throat or any long-term illnesses. If you have egg allergy ask for a recombinant injection .
- ❖ Stay well hydrated before getting the shot.

5. Trivalent and quadrivalent shots containing the immunity-boosting adjuvant (65 years and older)

6. Jet injection

7. Recombinant quadrivalent shots (18 years and older). There is a nasal spray too which isn't advised for pregnant women. The standard-dose flu shot can be given to ages six months and older.

Flu shots reduce the risk of flu-associated hospitalisation for children, working-age adults and older people. "They can help combat lung disease, chronic asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and bronchiectasis and reduce the chances of pneumonia-related hospitalisation by 43 percent," says Dr S Suresh, Associate Consultant, Institute of Pulmonary Critical Care Medicine and Lung Transplantation, Gleneagles Global Health City, Chennai. Consult your doctor which vaccine is most suitable. "It takes about two weeks to develop enough antibodies from the flu vaccine to protect you against the flu," says Dr Lakshmy Menon, Consultant Neonatologist and Pediatrician, Cloudnine Group of Hospitals, Bengaluru.