



FLU VACCINE AND COVID-19

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MEDICAL AID SOCIETY



Due to potential overlap between the country's COVID-19 vaccine roll-out and the flu vaccination season, it is important to know that these two vaccines should be staggered.

At this point, there is no scientific evidence to support the safety or harm of simultaneous administration of the flu and COVID-19 vaccines. However, experts recommend a gap of at least two weeks between receiving one vaccine and the other to ensure that your body mounts a sufficient immune response after getting each vaccine.



The seasonal flu that usually makes its way around during winter months is one of the main causes of pneumonia or lower respiratory tract infections (LRTI), and 8-10% of all patients with pneumonia test positive for influenza. In recent years, annual flu epidemics have resulted in an estimated three to five million cases of severe illness, and around 290 000 to 650 000 deaths globally. While influenza monitoring indicates that we did not experience a typical flu season last year, according to experts this was highly unusual and was in most part due to the preventative measures taken against COVID-19.

While the flu vaccine is still recommended for as many people as possible, limited healthcare resources at this stage means that the National Department of Health (NDoH) has again recommended prioritising the following groups of people to receive the flu vaccine this year:

- 1 All healthcare workers (mandatory vaccination)
- 2 Individuals aged >65 years
- 3 Individuals with cardiovascular disease (including chronic heart disease, hypertension, stroke and diabetes) and chronic lung disease (including asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
- 4 Pregnant women
- 5 People living with HIV and AIDS

The importance of flu vaccination in especially high-risk groups remains an important safeguard against preventable illness and hospitalisation. In addition to ensuring that their appointments for vaccinations are scheduled at least two weeks apart, members in the highest risk categories are advised to inform their healthcare providers of their vaccination history.

How the Society can help

The Society's vaccine benefit covers one flu vaccine per beneficiary, per year.



Remember that prevention is always better than cure.

You **CAN** reduce the risk of flu for yourself and your loved ones this winter by using the Society's vaccination benefits!