



Dear Member

Since April is vaccination month, we decided to help you dismiss some common misconceptions about the flu vaccine and make you aware of ten health warnings that you absolutely cannot ignore.

We welcome any suggestions that you may have on articles or member benefits you would like published in future newsletters.

Please send your suggestions to the Scheme Manager, Aashna Albert, by e-mail to aalbert@mhg.co.za or by fax to **0861 64 77 75**.

Enjoy the read ...



Five common flu shot myths

Vaccination is the single best way to prevent the flu, but many people still have lingering doubts about the effectiveness and importance of getting an annual flu shot. The reality is that it's one of the most important things we can do to help prevent the spread of this potentially life-threatening disease.

Here are **five common myths** about the flu vaccine:

MYTH: You can catch the flu from the vaccine.

THE TRUTH: The influenza vaccine is inactive and made from virus particles that can't transmit infection. Once administered, it takes a week or two to develop full protection and there are many chances for a person to become sick during that short window. This can lead to the incorrect assumption that the vaccine caused their illness.

The vaccine reduces the odds of getting the flu from as high as one in four to one in 10 and protects you from the three or four influenza viruses that research indicates will be the most common during the upcoming flu season. People can still get the flu despite getting the vaccine if they're exposed to a strain of influenza that isn't a 100 per cent match, but the severity is usually less because some immunity has been generated.

MYTH: Getting the flu vaccination is all you need to do to protect yourself from the flu.

THE TRUTH: Sickness runs rampant during the winter months, as people tend to stay indoors or choose to go to school or work when they're sick. Taking everyday preventive action like avoiding contact with sick people, staying home if you're sick, covering your mouth when you cough or sneeze and washing your hands often with soap will help stop the spread of germs.

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MYTH: You don't need a flu shot every year.

THE TRUTH: The flu shot will protect you from three or four influenza viruses that research indicates will be the most common during the upcoming flu season. But the viruses mutate from year to year and your immunity wanes over time, so it's important to get vaccinated every year to protect you from the strains most likely to cause an outbreak. This year the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends that everyone who is six months old or older get the flu vaccine.

MYTH: The flu vaccine is dangerous.

THE TRUTH: Common side-effects of the flu vaccine include fatigue, mild fever, soreness or a runny nose. The risk of serious side-effects is about one in a million.

MYTH: Many people can't get the flu shot.

THE TRUTH: While it's true that there are some important health considerations people should be aware of regarding the flu vaccine, there are vaccines that can be safely given to almost everyone. For example, individuals with egg allergies should talk to their doctor or pharmacist about a type of vaccine that contains no egg protein. Patients with weakened immune systems who shouldn't get the intra-nasal vaccine should still receive the injectable vaccine. There are even vaccine options for people who want to avoid preservatives.

Source: <https://intermountainhealthcare.org/blogs/2015/10/five-common-flu-shot-myths-that-are-not-true/>



REMINDER

Avoid the flu by getting vaccinated. The flu season is upon us and at PG Group Medical Scheme we would like to encourage all our members to get their annual flu injections. The flu injection will be paid for from your wellness benefits and is easily available from either Clicks or Dis-Chem pharmacies.

Prescribed minimum benefit (PMB) alert

Why is it necessary for an ICD-10 diagnosis code to appear on a chronic medication prescription if the medication listed on the prescription is taken as chronic medication that is related to PMB conditions?

Answer

ICD-10 codes are used to verify the condition (diagnosis) for which the medication is to be used; not all chronic conditions are PMB-related and some medication can be prescribed for more than one condition.



10 common health warnings you should not ignore

There may be more to your random bouts of tiredness than you think; it could be your body's way of alerting you to underlying health issues.

'Many patients only turn to their doctors when something serious has gone wrong or when they feel really ill. Many ignore subtle symptoms year in and year out, but going to the doctor earlier could have

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helped you catch the underlying disease and treated it right away. Early treatment often leads to better outcomes,' says Dr Heidi van Deventer.

Here are the 10 most commonly ignored symptoms:

- 1. Your urine is dark yellow/orange/brown in colour:**
Your kidneys may be in danger.

What to do? Bear in mind that vitamins or certain other medication can cause your urine to become dark in colour. Drink lots of water and if the urine colour does not improve, rather have a urine dipstick test done. These can be done at major pharmacies or at your general practitioner (GP). The test will indicate if you are at risk of kidney disease.

- 2. You're tired all the time:** Your thyroid may be a problem or you could have anaemia.

What to do? If you don't see any improvement after getting enough sleep and taking your vitamins, you need to head to your GP for a blood test to check for thyroid problems or anaemia.

- 3. Your sclerae (the white part of your eyes) are yellow:**
This may be an indication of hepatitis or liver problems.

What to do? If you notice that you have yellow eyes, even if you don't experience any other symptoms, it's a good idea to have blood tests done to check your liver function. This can be done by your GP.

- 4. You get headaches (mild or severe) or blurry/double vision:** This could be a sign of high blood pressure.

What to do? You can have your blood pressure checked at any pharmacy. If the reading is more than 140/90 on two separate occasions, you need to see your GP.

- 5. Your skin is dry, blemished or breaking out:** This is another sign of an underactive thyroid. It could also be an indication of a vitamin C or zinc deficiency. It could also be caused by a hormonal imbalance.

What to do? Try taking vitamin C and zinc supplements for at least two to three months. If you have a history of thyroid or hormone problems, rather have a blood test done at your GP.



- 6. Your lips are cracked:** This is also a sign of a vitamin C and zinc and/or magnesium deficiency.

What to do? Take a supplement with vitamin C, zinc and/or magnesium for at least two to three months.

- 7. You feel hungry and thirsty often and you also go to the loo often:** These symptoms could indicate that you are at risk of diabetes.

What to do? Have your glucose tested. This can be done at home if you or a family member has a glucose testing device. It can also be done at the pharmacy. It is best to do this test in the morning before you've eaten. If it is higher than seven on two separate occasions, you need to visit your GP for a glucose tolerance test.

- 8. Your stool is very dark and smells unusually bad:** This could be a sign of bleeding in the stomach or a stomach ulcer. If your stool is very light or white in colour, it could be your gall bladder or you could have liver problems.

What to do? Go to your GP for urine and blood tests.

- 9. You're unexpectedly gaining or losing weight:** If you're gaining weight, you could be suffering from an underactive thyroid or hormonal imbalance. If you're losing weight, you could have an overactive thyroid, cancer, tuberculosis or diabetes.

What to do? The best way to confirm the cause of sudden weight gain or weight loss is to have blood tests done at your GP.

- 10. Your feet are swollen and you experience sudden lethargy, anxiety, palpitations or chest pain:** Your heart might be at risk.

What to do? Have a cholesterol, glucose and blood pressure test done at a pharmacy. If the results are concerning, visit your GP.

Source: Health 24

<http://www.health24.com/Lifestyle/Woman/Your-body/10-common-health-warnings-you-should-not-ignore-20160209>



The **Flu** Season is **here!**



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