THE WELLNESS ARCHITECTS

# Workplace Flu Vaccinations

Influenza, commonly known as 'the flu', is an illness caused by a group of viruses (the influenza viruses) that infect the respiratory tract. Influenza infection usually has different symptoms and causes a more severe illness than most other common viral respiratory infections and may be a life-threatening infection in certain people; it should not be confused with the common cold.

In most parts of Australia, influenza outbreaks are seasonal, occurring between late autumn and early spring. Seasonal outbreaks occur every year and vary from mild sporadic outbreaks to serious epidemics; it is estimated that between 5 and 20% of the population may be infected annually.

## INFLUENZA FACTS

- Influenza causes an estimated 1,500 deaths, 1 18,000 hospitalisations and 300,000 GP consultations annually in Australia. Perhaps surprisingly, the number of deaths from influenza each year is similar to the number of Australian road traffic fatalities.
- Influenza vaccine does not contain any live viruses and therefore cannot cause the illness.
- Vaccination is the most affective protection against influenza.
- Serious adverse reactions to the influenza vaccine are rare, with most common reactions being local redness and swelling.
- The types of influenza viruses circulating in the community change from year to year. In light of this, a new vaccine is made each year to protect against the current strains.
- The types of influenza viruses circulating in the community change from year to year. In light of this, a new vaccine is made each year to protect against the current strains. In addition, immunity provided by the current influenza vaccines begins to fade after a year, so it is important to get vaccinated against influenza every year regardless of vaccine strain changes.
- The period between infection & onset of symptoms for influenza is 1-3 days. A person with influenza may be contagious 24hours before symptoms begin and continue to be infectious for a week after the onset of symptoms.
- Vaccination against influenza is best undertaken in Autumn (March-May) in anticipation of Australia's peak flu season which is usually between June & September.

Annual vaccination is considered as the most effective protection against the flu by health authorities worldwide including the World Health Organisation.

*Reference: www.isg.org.au*