



THE SEASONAL INFLUENZA (FLU) VACCINATION IS RECOMMENDED FOR:

A) Persons with an increased risk of complications from influenza. (The compulsory health insurance assumes the vaccination costs for this group provided the deductible rate ("franchise") has already been reached.)

They are:

- Persons from 65 years of age (*see page 2*);
- Pregnant women and women who have given birth in the past 4 weeks;
- Premature babies (born before the 33rd week (< 32 0/7 GW) or weighing below 1500 g at birth) from the age of 6 months for the first two winters after birth*;
- Persons (from the age of 6 months*) with one of the following chronic conditions: heart disease; lung disease (e.g. bronchial asthma); metabolic disorders affecting the heart, lungs or kidneys (e.g. diabetes or morbid obesity, BMI ≥40); neurological (e.g. M. Parkinson disease, cerebrovascular disease) or musculoskeletal disease affecting the heart, lungs or kidneys; hepatopathy; renal failure; asplenia or spleen dysfunction (including haemoglobinopathies); immunodeficiency (e.g. HIV infection, cancer, immunosuppressive therapy);

B) Persons who come into regular contact within their family, in retirement or nursing homes and in institutions for persons with chronic diseases, or as part of their private or professional activities** with:

- Persons in category A);
- Infants under the age of 6 months (they have an increased risk of flu complications and cannot be vaccinated due to their young age).

The flu vaccination is particularly recommended for all health care professionals, all persons working in the paramedical field, staff of crèches, day nurseries, day-care centres, nursing homes for the elderly, as well as institutions for persons with chronic diseases, including students, interns and trainees.

C) Persons who come into regular contact with or work with poultry or wild birds, in order to reduce the frequency of seasonal influenza cases requiring differential diagnosis, as well as the risk of seasonal & avian double infection and the development of novel virus recombinants.

The seasonal flu vaccination can also be considered for all persons who wish to reduce their risk of influenza illness for private and/or professional reasons.

* *For children aged between 6 months and 8 years who have never received a flu vaccine before, the administration of two doses (4 weeks apart) is recommended in their first flu vaccination season. (If Fluarix Tetra® is administered off-label to children < 36 months, they should only be given two half doses instead of two whole ones).*

** *"Persons who come into regular contact" in category B) refers to children and adults between 6 months and 64 years of age. If flu vaccination is recommended for professional reasons, the cost of the vaccination are usually assumed by the employer.*

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Influenza (flu) vaccination recommendations for 2023/2024

The *Federal Commission for Vaccination (FCV; EKIF in German or CFV in French, respectively)* and the Federal Office of Public Health (FOPH) recommend flu vaccination with all standard dose (SD) and high-dose (HD) influenza vaccines with a market authorisation and cost coverage under the compulsory health insurance for the age and indication groups in question. Two different SD and one HD vaccines are currently available for seasonal influenza vaccination (Table 1).

Table 1: Overview of products available for the 2023/2024 season (as at April 2023)

Product (manufactured by)	Vaccine type	Authorised for	Assumption of costs
Efluelda® (Sanofi Pasteur)	Split virion*, quadrivalent, high dose vaccine for higher impact with four times the amount of antigen (60µg per dose), intramuscular injection	Adults aged 65 and over	for all persons ≥75, also for persons ≥65 with at least one extra risk factor according to the flu vaccine recommendations
Fluarix Tetra® (GlaxoSmithKline)	Split virion*, quadrivalent, standard dose (15µg per dose), intramuscular injection	Adults and children aged from 36 months	for all persons ≥65, also for all adults and children with at least one risk factor under the flu vaccine recommendations
Vaxigrip Tetra® (Sanofi Pasteur)	Split virion*, quadrivalent, standard dose (15µg per dose), intramuscular injection	Adults and children aged from 6 months	

*) Split virion: fragmented virus particles containing haemagglutinin and neuraminidase. These three products are not adjuvanted (i.e. they contain no adjuvants).

A meta analysis ([Lee et al., Vaccine 2021; doi: 10.1016/j.vaccine.2020.09.004](#)) with 34 million participants over an application period >10 years shows higher effectiveness of HD vaccines (60µg instead of the standard dose of 15 µg antigens per vaccinal strain) against flu complications among the aged; a finding that was also confirmed in Denmark. This finding and further data relating to HD vaccines show 10% to 20% better protection for persons aged ≥65, which is why HD vaccines are also authorised in Switzerland from the age of 65 with costs being covered for all persons aged ≥75 and for persons aged ≥65 with at least one additional risk factor for serious influenza due to comorbidity as defined in the flu vaccine recommendations. In these age and risk groups a) the risk of contracting serious flu or falling ill from complications and being hospitalised is greater than for younger healthy persons, and b) the immune response to the vaccination is less effective depending on the influenza strain. These are good reasons to recommend a high dose of the vaccine to protect these persons from influenza.

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