Seasonal Influenza and Vaccination

WHO Estimates

1 billion cases of influenza each year worldwide

Results in
3-5 million annual cases of severe illness
300,000-500,000 deaths worldwide each year

What is Seasonal Influenza?

Seasonal Influenza, commonly called “the flu,” is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and lungs.

Seasonal influenza virus is a serious public health problem that poses a significant threat to the health of children and older adults, and places a burden on the health-care system.

Seasonal influenza is a highly contagious disease with the potential to spread quickly in crowded and close-knit populations. It is the most common cause of acute respiratory illness.

Symptoms:

1 to 4 days after exposure, the body symptoms appear*:

- Fever
- Cough
- Muscle aches & pains
- Headache
- Dry cough
- Tiredness

Secondary illness in families: Some children can spread influenza to household members who subsequently become ill. 

When one family member gets the flu, it can spread to other family members.

Transmission:

- Children, particularly those in child care or schools, are the main transmitters of flu.
- Every 6-12 children who got the flu had 1-3 household members who subsequently became ill.
- Vaccination earlier in the season indicates further cost savings and increase in quality-adjusted life years due to reductions in indirect costs, and averted influenza-like illness among the unimmunised population.

Impact of Seasonal Influenza

A seasonal influenza epidemic can take an economic toll through lost workforce productivity and strain on health services⁴-⁵

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<th>Cost-effectiveness of Influenza Vaccination in Children</th>
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<td>Vaccinating children aged 2-17 years can lead to substantial yet under-recognised savings due to reductions in indirect costs, and averted influenza-like illness among the unimmunised population.</td>
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The Best Defence: Annual Influenza Vaccination

Influenza vaccination is the most effective way to prevent infection⁵.

Vaccination in the community, the family, and the workplace limits the spread of influenza and indirectly protects unimmunised individuals.

High levels of vaccination in the community can decrease the severity of cases, reduce hospitalisation, and stop outbreaks of the flu.

Cost-effectiveness of Influenza Vaccination in Children

Studies indicate Influenza vaccination in children is cost-effective and often cost-saving⁵.

The economic benefit of savings: Vaccination programmes targeted to children can lead to cost savings, such as parent/guardian benefits for lost work, lower healthcare costs, and reduced missed school days.

Vaccination earlier in the season incurs fewer cost savings and increases in quality-adjusted life years⁵.

References:

13. WHO globally monitors influenza and other acute respiratory infections based on influenza-like illness activity among the unimmunised population.