

# INFLUENZA AND ASTHMATICS

Seasonal flu is a contagious disease caused by the influenza virus. Even if their asthma is mild and their symptoms are controlled by medication, asthma sufferers run a greater risk of acute disease and serious complications (hospitalization and death).

## ASTHMATICS ARE MORE VULNERABLE

Asthma makes people more vulnerable to serious flu complications. Asthmatics often have an inflammation of their respiratory tract. The flu can aggravate this inflammation. Asthma is the most frequent medical condition among adults and children hospitalized due to the flu.

## FLU SYMPTOMS

The flu can cause mild to serious symptoms and sometimes even lead to death. Infected persons experience at least one of the following symptoms:

- Fever, not always present, particularly in the elderly
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Muscle and joint pain
- Headache
- Extreme fatigue
- Nausea and vomiting, particularly in children

Most people infected by the influenza virus will get better in just a few days, but asthmatics may experience a rapid deterioration in their general health.

## FLU COMPLICATIONS

The flu can aggravate respiratory symptoms and trigger asthma attacks.

Pneumonia, bronchitis, sinusitis and otitis are some of the most frequent complications of the flu but some people will develop even more serious complications which can sometimes be fatal.

## TREATING THE FLU

Fever and pain medication can ease flu symptoms. Antiviral medication against the influenza virus can help reduce the duration of symptoms and the risk of complications. It must be taken within 48 hours following onset of the first symptoms.

## PREVENTING THE FLU

The best way to prevent the flu is to receive the vaccine every year. Good hygiene habits such as washing your hands regularly and covering your mouth when coughing can help limit propagation of the flu and other respiratory viruses. Asthmatics should avoid visiting people who have the flu.

### VACCINATION, YOUR BEST PROTECTION AGAINST THE INFLUENZA VIRUS

People who are 6 months and older and who have asthma severe enough to require regular medical attention should receive the influenza vaccine. Data strongly supports the preventive effect of vaccination among asthmatics and their close contacts. The vaccine reduces the risk of catching the flu and, if the infection does occur, it reduces the risk of complications. **The flu shot should be part of all asthmatics' management plan.**

*Vaccination against serious pneumococcal infections (for example: blood infections, pneumonia, meningitis): two different pneumococcal vaccines are available to ensure your protection. Ask your physician or the CLSC to find out if this type of vaccine is appropriate for you.*

I SPREAD HEALTH, NOT INFLUENZA.  
**I GET THE FLU SHOT.**