

## The Influenza Vaccine: Is It Safe For Patients With Systemic Lupus Erythematosus?

Welcome to autumn in Ontario, along with the beautiful change in colours we have reached that time of year known as Flu Season. Influenza can be a scary illness to catch, especially when you have Lupus and are taking many immune suppressing medications. In general, the flu vaccine is safe for patients with SLE. It is a well-tolerated vaccine that is inactive meaning individuals **cannot** become sick from receiving this immunization. You should not be receiving the flu vaccine if you are allergic to eggs, have had a previous serious reaction to the vaccine, are under 6 months of age or are recovering from an acute infection/viral illness. Patients who are immunocompromised (Lupus patients), pregnant or planning to become pregnant, elderly or children over the age of 6 months should be receiving this vaccine. The 2019-2020 Flu Vaccine will cover the following strains: a) H1N1 Influenza A, b) Influenza B and c) Influenza A H3N2.

There are common side effects of receiving the vaccine which include pain at the administration site, nasal congestion or runny nose. If you do experience pain in your arm you may take regular acetaminophen to help if your medical team feels it is safe for you to take acetaminophen. The flu shot is available now and can be found in hospitals, Shoppers Drug Mart Pharmacies and your family physician's office. It is still important to consult your medical team before receiving the flu vaccine.

Lupus patients have a lot to keep track of including doctor's visits and lists of medications; to keep track of all your vaccinations try downloading the application CANImmunize on your phone or tablet (available for Iphone and Android). This application provides a fantastic interface and will remind you of when you are due for your next vaccine.

***Protect yourself and others, please get your flu shot this season!!***

For weekly reports on the upcoming flu season in your area follow this website: <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/flu-influenza/influenza-surveillance/weekly-influenza-reports.html>