

Precautions

Washing your hands often, especially after blowing your nose or sneezing, covering your mouth and nose when sneezing, avoiding close contact with someone with signs of a cold or respiratory disease are effective preventative measures.

Aftermath

The flu can strike at any age and cause complications such as bronchitis, pneumonia and, especially in children, sinusitis and ear infections. The anti-flu campaign is aimed at everyone, with particular regard to the categories at risk and most in contact with the public, to whom protection is offered free of charge: pregnant women, citizens over

60, children aged between 6 months and 6 years, people of any age affected by diseases such as to increase the risk of complications, long-term hospitalized patients, family members of subjects at risk, employees of public services of primary collective and personal interest in contact with animals which, it has been highlighted, could constitute a source of infection by non-human influenza viruses.

Mutations

"For the flu we have to get vaccinated - said Andrea Gori, professor of infectious diseases at the University of Milan - because every year the virus tends to change. It changes much more easily than a Coronavirus, so based on the types that have been circulating in the last the combinations are updated for months to cover the different variants".



Concomitant vaccinations

Influenza and anti-Covid19 vaccinations, as well as being fully compatible, are both recommended. In particular, for the risk categories for which the third dose / booster against Covid-19 is currently authorized (health care, over 80, nursing home patients, frail), the possibility of vaccinating simultaneously or separately, as they prefer, will be offered. .

Preliminary results from the first descriptive study of concomitant distribution of the high-dose quadrivalent vaccine of Sanofi Pasteur with the third dose of Covid-19 mRNA vaccine show that co-administration of the two vaccines was safe, well tolerated and with an adequate equal antibody response. to each vaccine administered individually. Above 65 years of age, for those who have yet to do so, the 13 valent anti-pneumococcal conjugate vaccine is also recommended, which removes the risk of bacterial pneumonia.

Isolated cases

A first case of influenza A / H3 virus identified in Varese was confirmed at the University of Milan in a child with flu symptoms. A second case of A / H3 influenza virus identified at the Amedeo di Savoia Hospital in Turin in a child with pneumonia.

Symptoms

Easily transmitted respiratory disease, flu usually causes temperature rise that can be measured with a thermometer, fatigue, pain in the joints (feeling of broken bones and sore muscles), and resolves after three to four days of rest, but in some categories of people, especially the elderly and chronically ill, can cause serious complications. Hence, and also to avoid the double epidemic simultaneously with the Covid one, the importance of getting vaccinated. And the best time to do this is autumn, remember the Higher Institute of Health.

The differences with Covid

One of the differences with the Coronavirus plays on the respiratory system, but the symptoms are very similar, especially in the initial phase. The queen test obviously remains the swab: it is difficult without a test to be sure that it is not Covid. And remember that some forms of flu can lead to the loss of taste and smell. Although, it must be said, the symptom is rarer than what happens in the Coronavirus.

The discriminating factor then lies in the evolution of the infection: the flu does not lead to those forms of interstitial pneumonia that Sars Cov-2 can induce. The use of the oximeter is important after the diagnosis of the test, to monitor the progress of the disease. But good blood oxygenation values cannot exclude the presence of Covid.

Coverage

In the autumn of 2020, the launch of the flu campaign had made it possible to reach coverage in the elderly population of over 65%, much higher than the 54% in 2019. Underway, vaccines against influenza based on the same RNA technology messenger used in Covid-19 vaccinations.



Seqirus, Moderna, Pfizer and Sanofi, are companies that have announced that they have started tests in this sense, and could soon be followed by others that are conducting studies in the preclinical phase. With mRNA vaccines, an article in Nature explains, immune responses could be broader, strain selection more accurate, and production could be faster and more flexible.

Forecasts

"In light of the cases of seasonal flu that occurred last year and the relaxation of the restrictions called to stem the pandemic, this year a medium-intensity flu season is expected, so caution and prevention are recommended", said Giovanni Maga, director of the CNR Institute of Molecular Genetics. "Last year we witnessed a very low circulation of influenza viruses - explains the researcher - to these values the prevention measures that limited the circulation of all respiratory viruses could have contributed" .

Prevailing strains

In these weeks, so-called parainfluenza viruses will circulate. The real influence, on the other hand, occurs when the intense cold is prolonged. And the 2021-2022 flu - explains Fabrizio Pregliasco, virologist hygienist at the University of Milan - will be characterized by the prevalence of two different viruses compared to last year: a variant H1N1 and a relatively new variant H3N2 that comes from the southern hemisphere , which therefore could give itself as a virus a season of average intensity: 4-6 million cases " .

Senior citizens

Influenza, the third cause of death from infectious disease in Italy, is known to all but only 4.4% admit they are very afraid - Censis data - while 25.8% of the elderly (over 75 years old) he does not fear it at all. In Italy, recalls Michele Conversano (HappyAgeing scientific committee), the flu pathology affects, every year,

about 9% of the general population and about eight thousand are the annual deaths related to the flu and its complications and of these 84% concern subjects over 65 years of age. The percentage of vaccinated subjects among the over 60s is struggling to reach the minimum desirable threshold of 75% despite the fact that last season a higher coverage was achieved than in previous years.

Children

This year, with schools open and greater mobility, more cases of influenza are expected among children than last year. And if this age group "has the good fortune to benefit from an immune response that allows it to defend itself well against respiratory viruses, it represents the means for the spread of the infectious agent". This was stated by Rocco Russo, head of vaccines technical table Sip (Italian Society of Pediatrics), who invites us not to underestimate this respiratory infection in children.

- Every vaccinated person (adult or child) hinders the circulation of the virus. Getting vaccinated against the flu is especially important in conjunction with the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Influenza with an average of 8,000 deaths every year is the third leading cause of death in Italy from infectious disease, and is the main cause of absence from work and school.
- Vaccination is the most effective way to prevent the flu and its complications.
- In the 2021/2022 season, vaccination is particularly recommended as the overlap of COVID-19 and seasonal flu could have considerable effects in terms of disease and mortality.



Influenza is a very contagious disease, it is transmitted even before the onset of symptoms and up to 3-7 days after the onset of the disease, through the airways, but also through contact with hands contaminated with respiratory secretions.

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