

Swine-flu and Asthma – What asthmatics should know

Health tips from EAACI, the European Academy for Allergy and Clinical Immunology

How dangerous is swine-flu for asthmatics?

The potential negative effects are heavily dependent on the underlying health of the patient. Among those exposed to serious life-threatening symptoms and even death, are patients with pre-existing respiratory conditions and asthmatics. One of the differences between the H1N1 swine-flu virus and the seasonal flu is that young people suffer from it more frequently. Young asthma patients should therefore take special care.

Does vaccination against swine-flu make sense and what protection does it offer?

For members of risk groups such as e.g. asthmatics, a vaccination is recommended. Preliminary tests of an H1N1 swine-flu vaccine show that a single dose creates enough antibodies to protect against the virus within about 10 days.

What side-effects can occur as a result of swine-flu vaccination?

It can be assumed that the vaccine is very similar to the seasonal flu vaccine. However, like other vaccinations, it may cause allergic reactions or side-effects such as soreness, itchiness or aches.

Is there a risk of becoming ill from the flu vaccination?

It is a commonly held misbelief that the flu vaccination causes illness in asthmatics. This misbelief is due to the fact that vaccinations are normally given at times of year with high rates of flu-like illnesses from other viruses. When the symptoms then occur, they might be falsely attributed to the vaccination.

How can swine-flu be identified?

The actual flu starts with fatigue, aching joints, high fever, coughing, headaches, and possibly diarrhoea. Only your doctor can determine whether it's a seasonal flu virus or H1N1, on the basis of a test.

Which medicines help after swine-flu is diagnosed?

Medication like Tamiflu or Relenza may be useful for the treatment of influenza or as a prophylaxis. However, bearing in mind the moderate symptoms of swine-flu so far observed, treatment with Tamiflu or Relenza will be evaluated by your prescribing doctor.

During a flu epidemic, what should asthmatics otherwise note?

It is important to take general preventive steps, such as hand hygiene and a change of greeting habits. Asthmatics should take greater care of their health during a flu epidemic, and consult their doctor immediately if complications should occur.

The above information cannot replace personal medical advice from your doctor.
Therefore, please consult your doctor before making any medical decisions.