

**WHO Regional Office for Europe recommendations on influenza  
vaccination during the 2013/2014 winter season**

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# WHO Regional Office for Europe recommendations on influenza vaccination during the 2013/2014 winter season

Influenza infection is usually mild and uncomplicated, but may occasionally cause severe disease, particularly among the elderly, pregnant women, very young children and persons with underlying medical conditions. Seasonal influenza vaccination is safe and the most effective means of preventing infection and severe outcomes caused by influenza viruses.

In the northern hemisphere, influenza usually causes annual epidemics during autumn and winter. Due to the influenza virus' continuous genetic and antigenic changes, vaccination against influenza is recommended every year before the season begins. WHO annually recommends a vaccine composition for the northern hemisphere, which targets those strains expected to be the most common in the coming season.

The virus strains recommended for inclusion in the *trivalent* seasonal influenza vaccine in the northern hemisphere 2013/2014 winter season are:<sup>1</sup>

- A/California/7/2009 (H1N1)pdm09-like virus
- A(H3N2) virus antigenically like the cell-propagated prototype virus A/Victoria/361/2011\*
- B/Massachusetts/2/2012-like virus.

In *quadrivalent* vaccines containing two influenza B viruses, it is recommended to include the above three viruses plus a B/Brisbane/60/2008-like virus.

\* It is recommended that A/Texas/50/2012 is used due to antigenic changes in earlier A/Victoria/361/2011-like vaccine viruses resulting from adaptation to propagation in eggs.

## RECOMMENDATED TARGET GROUPS FOR INFLUENZA VACCINATION

Seasonal vaccination against influenza is safe and can benefit all age groups, but is especially important for people at higher risk of serious influenza complications. Specific population groups may be targeted for vaccination depending on the objectives of the national vaccination programme, documented vaccine effectiveness, access to vaccine, and the ability to implement vaccination campaigns in the targeted groups.

The priority groups for immunization listed below are drawn from the 2012 WHO position paper on influenza vaccines.<sup>2,3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the WHO Consultation and Information Meeting on the Composition of Influenza Virus Vaccines for the Northern Hemisphere 2013-2014: *Recommended composition of influenza virus vaccines for use in the 2013-2014 northern hemisphere influenza season*; [www.who.int/influenza/vaccines/virus/recommendations/201302\\_recommendation.pdf](http://www.who.int/influenza/vaccines/virus/recommendations/201302_recommendation.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Seasonal influenza vaccine, *Weekly Epidemiological Record*: 2012 (21); 87, 201–16 ([www.who.int/wer/2012/wer8721.pdf](http://www.who.int/wer/2012/wer8721.pdf))

<sup>3</sup> Vaccines against influenza WHO position paper, *Weekly Epidemiological Record*, 2012 (47); 87, 461–76 ([www.who.int/wer/2012/wer8747.pdf](http://www.who.int/wer/2012/wer8747.pdf))

Priority groups that should be considered for immunization include:

- pregnant women;
- individuals >6 months with chronic heart or lung diseases, metabolic or renal disease, chronic liver disease, chronic neurological conditions or immunodeficiencies;
- elderly persons over a nationally defined age limit, irrespective of other risk factors;
- residents of long-term care facilities for older persons and the disabled;
- children aged 6–59 months;
- health care workers including those who work in facilities that care for the elderly or persons with disabilities.

### **Further information**

Questions and Answers for health professionals on seasonal inactivated influenza vaccines.

[http://www.euro.who.int/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0005/155633/Q-and-A\\_on\\_seasonal\\_inactivated\\_influenza\\_vaccines\\_21-12-2011\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.euro.who.int/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/155633/Q-and-A_on_seasonal_inactivated_influenza_vaccines_21-12-2011_FINAL.pdf)