Influenza (“the flu”) is caused by influenza viruses which affect all parts of the world. Each year influenza is estimated to result in about 3 to 5 million cases of serious illness, and about 290,000 to 650,000 deaths. Everyone can be affected but some are more at risk than others:

- Elderly
- Pregnant women
- People with underlying health conditions
- Children under 59 months of age
- Healthcare workers

### What is influenza and who is affected by it?

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### Should people with cardiovascular disease get their annual flu shot?

The World Health Organization recommends that people with cardiovascular disease get their annual flu shot. Studies show that influenza vaccination in cardiovascular disease patients:

- Can reduce the chance of heart attacks by up to 67%
- Can reduce the chance of stroke by 24%

But does the flu shot really work?

Because usually the vaccines contain elements from circulating influenza viruses, influenza vaccination will protect you against such infections and potential complications. However, it may not protect you against all influenza viruses; sometimes, new influenza viruses suddenly appear for which the vaccine will be less protective. Influenza vaccination will also not protect you against other infections, which can also give similar disease symptoms as influenza. Thus, although influenza immunization will protect you against infections and potential complications, it will not provide protection against all illness which might occur in the influenza season.

You can take other measures to help prevent the flu, such as covering your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze (throw the tissue in the trash after you use it), washing your hands often with soap and water, and avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

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2. [http://www.who.int/wer/2012/wer8747.pdf](http://www.who.int/wer/2012/wer8747.pdf)