



world diabetes day

14 November

ESWI

...scientists fighting influenza

Diabetes patients and influenza

Key facts about influenza

- The flu is a contagious disease that infects the nose, throat, and sometimes the lungs.
- Every year, 5% to 15% of the global population catches influenza. Worldwide, these annual outbreaks cause about 250,000 to 500,000 deaths.
- Anyone can get the flu, and serious problems related to the flu can happen at any age. But some people are at high risk of developing serious complications: people 65 years and older, people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), pregnant women, and young children.
- Influenza vaccines are safe and effective tools to protect from influenza infection and its complications.

Key facts about diabetes

- Type 1 diabetes is caused by the body's immune system attacking the insulin producing cells in the pancreas. The body no longer produces insulin and glucose levels rise. Treatment with insulin injections is always required for survival.
- In type 2 diabetes, the pancreas still often produces some insulin but either not enough or it is not used properly by the various organs in the body.
- Diabetes patients are a particularly heterogeneous patient group.
- Worldwide, about 415 million individuals suffer from diabetes, with type 2 diabetes accounting for up to 95% of all cases.
- 46.3% of people with diabetes are undiagnosed.
- New predictions anticipate that the number of patients with diabetes will reach almost 642 million by 2040.

Key facts about flu for people with diabetes

- A dangerous complication of the flu is pneumonia and people with diabetes are more at risk of developing this complication than people without diabetes.
- Flu, and other viral infections, can lead to higher blood sugar levels.
- People with diabetes are six times more likely to be hospitalized with influenza during flu outbreaks.
- Diabetes guidelines issued by the World Health Organization (WHO), the American Diabetes Association (ADA) and the European Association for the Study of Diabetes (EASD) recommend diabetes patients to get their flu vaccine at the start of every flu season.
- A recently published review study confirms that vaccinating people with diabetes against influenza is indeed the sensible thing to do (Vaccine Journal, 12 September 2017)
- But people with diabetes seem to be unaware of the potential risk of an influenza infection. In Germany, only 40% of the people with diabetes gets an annual flu vaccine. In Poland, the rate drops to 10%.

Protecting people with diabetes against influenza

Raising awareness among diabetes patients and increasing flu vaccination coverage is a responsibility shared by many parties. On 25 October 2017, the diabetes community decided to join forces and to pave the way towards an improved protection of diabetes patients. In fact, patient organizations, healthcare professionals and academic experts assembled in Leuven, Belgium, for a roundtable discussion organized by the Foundation of European Nurses in Diabetes (FEND) and the European Scientific Working group on Influenza (ESWI). The following organizations participated in the discussions:



INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR PEDIATRIC AND ADOLESCENT DIABETES (ISPAD)

EUROPEAN SCIENTIFIC WORKING GROUP ON INFLUENZA (ESWI)

Roundtable highlights and conclusions

Primary care professionals (GPs, nurses and pharmacists) play a crucial role in protecting diabetes patients against influenza. They need to provide their patients with clear, uniform messages and advice.

Primary care professionals are also potential vectors of disease. They need to protect themselves in order to protect their patients.

There is an urgent need to improve the scientific knowledge base among primary care professionals about the potential impact of influenza infection for diabetes patients.

Collecting a patient's medical history in a single record allows the development of personalized chronic management plans.

Analyzing big data of hospital admissions, mortality and weather conditions may reveal correlations between climate change and burden of influenza disease.

Introducing pharmacy vaccination considerably increases influenza vaccination uptake rates among at-risk patients, including people with diabetes.

Pharmacies are an underutilized resource in most healthcare systems.

In the Northern hemisphere, mid-November is the best time to start influenza vaccination campaigns, since the protection provided by vaccines is limited in time.

Late vaccination is thought to yield better protection against influenza infection. Research is urgently needed to support this claim.

All people with diabetes should get their annual flu vaccine, whether their diabetes is well controlled or not.

A personal invitation from the family physician is the best incentive for people with diabetes to get their flu vaccine.

High quality diabetes care leads to higher influenza vaccination uptake rates.

All stakeholder groups, including organizations of general practitioners, nurses, pharmacists, medical specialists and academic researchers, need to work together to educate and inform people with diabetes and their caregivers.