

DISCOVERY HEALTH ADVISES EMPLOYERS TO ENCOURAGE FLU VACCINATIONS FOR EMPLOYEES

Flu vaccinations can help to minimise complications of the seasonal flu

The annual influenza season has started and Dr Lucille Blumberg from the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) reminds us that it's critical for people who are at risk of complications of influenza to be vaccinated as soon as possible. This will help reduce complications of the seasonal flu.

Dr Blumberg says that "seasonal influenza is a very important cause and contributor to complications such as pneumonia, cardiac problems and even strokes and each winter the increase in people admitted to hospital with pneumonia parallels the influenza season." Reports show that this year's strain of the influenza virus is particularly bad.

An outbreak of the seasonal influenza can cause large-scale absenteeism. The effects of influenza on the economy can be enormous with hundreds of employees affected and taking time off work to recover.

The benefits of having a flu vaccination should not be underestimated. It can reduce absenteeism and reduce healthcare costs.

There are very specific people who would benefit from the flu vaccination

The National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) has made the recommendations that people at risk of developing complications of the seasonal flu have the flu vaccination, if they have not done so already.

The NICD guidelines specify that the people who should consider having a flu vaccination include people with chronic lung and heart disease, diabetes and compromised immune systems (including HIV-positive people with CD4 counts above 200). Frail people, people over the age of 65 and those living in old-age homes and chronic care and rehabilitation institutions would also benefit from having a flu vaccination. A flu vaccination is also advantageous for children and adults with underlying medical conditions and for pregnant women at risk during the flu season. Employees, especially those working in industrial settings, who seek protection from the flu, will also benefit significantly from the flu vaccination.

Discovery Health offers corporate companies the opportunity to host a flu vaccination day before 30 June 2009

Through this once-off offer to our corporate clients, employees will be able to get their seasonal flu vaccination at a scheduled flu vaccination day from now until the end of June. We will arrange for a nurse and a stock of vaccines to be available on the scheduled day. Corporate companies wanting to take part in this health initiative will need to book with us in advance.

This offer is valid only to corporate clients with at least 50 Discovery Health members on site.

If companies want to extend the offer to employees who are not Discovery Health members, we will provide the service and bill the company for these employees afterwards.

Companies or their intermediaries can email fluvac@discovery.co.za to book their flu vaccination day.

Discovery Health encourages all high-risk members to have a flu vaccination before 30 June 2009

Discovery's core purpose of looking after the more than two million members we cover is central to everything we do. In addition to the offering to our corporate clients, Discovery

Health is making it possible for all members to have a flu vaccination to protect themselves against the seasonal flu and its potential complications, by providing access to flu vaccinations with no impact on members' funds. From now until the end of June, the Discovery Health Medical Scheme will pay the cost of flu vaccinations from risk and not members' Medical Savings Accounts.

Members can have the vaccination at a Clicks or Dis-Chem pharmacy, where they will not be charged for the administration of the vaccine, or at any other healthcare provider, who may charge a fee for administering the vaccine.

We are sending targeted communication to high-risk members to encourage them to have the flu vaccination

Members who have been identified as being at risk for developing complications of the seasonal flu will receive emails about this health initiative from today, 19 May. We will also provide information about the seasonal flu and answers to frequently asked questions on the website.

Keep an eye out for more information in the press

Discovery Health believes this is an important initiative and will include spots on radio and in the national newspapers as part of its awareness campaign.