Demand for flu vaccines spikes even as cases of flu remain low

Doctors, experts urge people to get vaccine to guard against ‘twindemic’ of flu and Covid-19

Cheryl Tan

The demand for flu vaccines has spiked in the past few months, as people look to safeguard their health with the looming winter flu season, and as travel gradually resumes.

Doctors and infectious diseases experts here have been encouraging people to get the flu vaccine, even though the number of influenza cases remains low, so as to guard against a possible “twindemic” of Covid-19 and the flu.

Dr Chan Chun Sing, head of primary care and family physician at Healthway Medical Group, said “There is uncertainty about when the flu season tends to arrive during the colder periods between December and February, and how severe it will be, which is why the Northern Hemisphere and Southern Hemisphere winter epidemics, as well as the constitutional prophylactic regimen.”

According to the information, the number of influenza patients with fever remains at a similar level, and the number of those who seek positive for influenza has remained at around 5 per cent.

“Twindemic” is a result of many factors, such as influenza and enhanced severity of respiratory illnesses such as COVID-19. The flu vaccine is recommended for all age groups, including children, seniors and people with underlying medical conditions.

In a recent study published in the British Medical Journal, researchers found that 68 per cent of people who received the vaccine were protected against influenza, while 29 per cent of those who did not receive the vaccine were protected.

“With the flu vaccine, individuals are also protected against the possibility of being infected with both influenza and COVID-19 at the same time, if they were to contract the viral illness,” the researchers added.

Source: The Straits Times, Page A14

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Fewer cases of acute respiratory infection

Polyclinics have been seeing fewer than half the number of patients seeking treatment for acute respiratory infection from May to September, compared with the same period last year. Of these, the number of patients with influenza-like illness was generally below 5 per cent, and those who tested positive for flu has remained at zero since June.

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