

Important information for patients  
with cardiovascular disease

# Protect your heart from the flu



Why it's important to protect yourself from this  
respiratory infection

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The flu (influenza) is not just a common cold: It can be severe and place considerable strain on the cardiovascular system. The risk of complications is significantly higher in people with heart disease.

## The most common symptoms include:

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|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  High fever (often<br>above 38.5°C) |  Headache and<br>aching limbs            |
|  Chills                             |  Feeling of being<br>unwell and fatigued |
|  Dry cough                          |                                                                                                                             |
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## An infection with consequences – including for your own heart

-  People aged 60 and over, as well as those with chronic cardiovascular disease, are at a significantly increased risk of severe flu.
-  In the first 30 days after a flu infection, the risk of a heart attack is significantly increased because inflammation can cause fatty deposits in the blood vessels to rupture, while a lack of oxygen and the stress of infection place additional strain on the heart.
-  Existing heart failure may worsen. There is also a risk of myocarditis if the flu virus directly attacks the heart.

**Good for your heart:**

# Protection against the flu through vaccination

An annual flu vaccination with the current WHO-recommended vaccine can help protect against severe illness – ideally in the autumn, before the start of the flu season.

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**The Standing Committee on Vaccination (STIKO) recommends the flu vaccination for:**

- ♥ Everyone aged 60 and over – using a vaccine specifically designed for this age group
- ♥ People of any age with chronic cardiovascular disease or other underlying health conditions
- ♥ Pregnant women from the second trimester onwards (or from the first trimester if they have underlying medical conditions), as well as close contacts of people with a weakened immune system

**Good reasons to get vaccinated against the flu:**

- ♥ Protection against severe flu and complications such as pneumonia
- ♥ Reduced risk of heart attack and stroke following flu infection
- ♥ Less strain on the heart and a lower risk of existing heart failure worsening

Scan for more information:



**Talk to your cardiologist about your flu vaccination status.**

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