



Bulletin No. 15
October 22, 1976
Swine Flu Side Effects

During the past week, many questions have appeared about side effects caused by influenza vaccine. Widespread coverage in the news media resulted from the temporal association between several deaths around the United States and swine flu vaccination. Extensive epidemiologic investigation into the circumstances surrounding these deaths has shown that they were not caused by the swine flu vaccine nor by the swine flu immunization program. In order to put some perspective on the events of the past week and to give a basis upon which to handle the questions about side effects caused by the flu vaccine, the following points should be emphasized.

1. Influenza vaccine has been used widely in the United States since 1947. Since 1948, no one has ever died from a side effect of influenza vaccine.
2. The State of Alaska has immunized the high risk population against influenza each year; there has never been a serious side effect in Alaska from influenza vaccine.
3. There is no evidence that swine flu caused any deaths this year.
4. More than 25,000 doses of swine flu vaccine have been given in Alaska in the past two weeks. There have been no serious side effects.

What are the side effects associated with swine flu?

Allergic reactions to swine flu vaccine are **extremely rare**. People who are allergic to eggs should **not** receive the vaccine. An allergic response from the vaccine would be similar to any other allergic response, and could include hives, wheal formation, bronchospasm, circulatory collapse. These side effects would be expected to occur within several hours of receiving the vaccine. The likelihood of such reaction is so rare that we do not expect that even **one** person in the entire State of Alaska will suffer this type of reaction.

Other reactions include side effects which a small percentage of people receiving the vaccine **will** experience. These include redness and tenderness at the injection site, mild fever (101°-102°), chills, nausea, muscle aches, joint pains, loss of appetite, headache, and fatigue. These symptoms may last 2 - 3 days. Pain and tenderness at the injection site may persist up to 1 week. These side effects are to be expected. They should not be alarming. They should be treated supportively with bed rest, mild analgesics such as aspirin or tylenol, and reassurance. If a person has more severe or prolonged side effects, he should be seen by a physician.

Most people have no side effects at all.

Swine flu vaccine is safe and should not produce any "surprises". People calling in must be evaluated on the basis of their symptoms. If they have symptoms which are different than those mentioned above, they are probably not caused by the vaccine and should be evaluated under normal operating procedures.