

## 7<sup>th</sup> Middle East - Global Summit and Expo on **Vaccines & Vaccination**

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### Influenza preventive vaccine

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Influenza, to a common man, looks like a simple infection as any common cold and neglects. Preventive influenza vaccine is available for over 60 years and is good but hardly utilized in the developing countries. Influenza-A (H3N2) viruses are the most common so far. H3N2-predominant seasons have been associated with more severe illness and mortality, especially in older people and young children, relative to seasons during which H1N1 or B viruses predominated. Will new flu viruses circulate this season? Flu viruses are constantly changing and it's not unusual for new seasonal flu viruses to appear each year. These are viruses that have small antigenic or genetic changes but which have evolved from previously circulating human seasonal flu viruses. When viruses change in this way, they are said to be "drifted" viruses. Most of the influenza A (H3N2) viruses circulating so far this season are different (drifted) from the H3N2 vaccine virus component. The timing of flu is very unpredictable and can vary in different parts of the country and from season to season. People should begin getting vaccinated soon after flu vaccine becomes available, ideally by October, to ensure that as many people as possible are protected before flu season begins. However, as long as flu viruses are circulating in the community, it's not too late to get vaccinated. In addition to getting a seasonal flu vaccine if you have not already gotten vaccinated, you can take everyday preventive actions like staying away from sick people and washing your hands to reduce the spread of germs. If you are sick with flu, stay home from work or school to prevent spreading flu to others. Also, it's important that antiviral drugs should be used to treat flu illness and prevent serious flu complications. Antiviral drugs become more important when circulating flu viruses are different from the vaccine viruses, which can mean that the vaccine doesn't work as well in protecting against infection with those viruses. People at high risk (such as children younger than 2 years, adults 60 and older, pregnant women, people who have medical conditions) or are very sick (such as those hospitalized because of flu) should get antiviral drugs. Other people can be treated with antivirals, at their health care professional's discretion. Treating high risk people or people who are very sick with flu with antiviral drugs is very important. It can mean the difference between having a milder illness instead of very serious illness that could result in a hospital stay. Treatment with anti-virals also can lessen serious flu complications that can result in hospitalization or death. Antiviral drugs are effective across all age-and risk groups. Studies show that antiviral drugs are under-prescribed for people who are at high risk of complications who get flu.

### Biography

A K Prasad is a Former University Professor & Head of the Department, Respiratory Virology, Vallabhbhai Patel Chest Institute, Delhi University. He is the Chairman of Influenza Foundation of India, Member of Asia Pacific Alliance for the Control of Influenza (APACI) Ltd. He is also the President of the Indian Virological Society (in process of renaming as Academy of Virologist), Executive Council Member of Indian College of Asthma, Allergy & Immunology President, Biotechnology Society of India and Former President of Indian College of Allergy & Applied Immunology. He is a Former Editor of *Indian Journal of Allergy & Applied Immunology* and former Short-time Consultant WHO (SEARO) Delhi.

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