

Flu vaccination lessen the preventable burden of flu in diabetics

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A new data from Singapore's Temasek Polytechnic emphasizes on the need of Flu vaccination recommendation to the people living with diabetes to avoid higher rates of clinic visits, hospitalisations and deaths



A team of researchers at Singapore on 22 Nov 2019 revealed the need for improved flu protection amongst those living with diabetes. In vulnerable populations such as people living with diabetes, the flu cause higher rates of clinic visits, hospitalisations and deaths.

The research, conducted by Temasek Polytechnic, showed that nearly half (41%) of Singaporeans living with diabetes are not vaccinated against the flu, contrary to the advice of public health bodies, including the World Health Organization and Singapore's Ministry of Health.

"With diabetes incidence fast-rising, it is critical that we reduce the preventable and high burden of flu for this at-risk group as part of Singapore's war on diabetes," said Dr Kalpana Bhaskaran, Vice President, Diabetes Singapore and Head, Centre for Applied Nutrition Services & Glycemic Index Research Unit, Temasek Polytechnic.

The research, conducted in October and November amongst Singaporeans living with diabetes, showed:

- More than half (54%) weren't aware that flu can affect blood sugar levels.
- The majority (58%) didn't think that vaccination was the most effective way to protect themselves from flu and that hand hygiene will protect them (61%).
- Only a quarter (26%) were aware of the risks associated with lung and respiratory infections.
- One of the most common reasons for not being vaccinated was it not being perceived as a priority (41%).
- Less than a fifth (17%) of those living with diabetes have had a recent discussion with their doctors about flu vaccination.

“In Singapore, the awareness of flu impact for people with diabetes is low – as is the uptake of vaccination within this group,” said Dr Bee Yong Mong, Endocrinologist at Singapore General Hospital and Vice President, Diabetes Singapore. “Healthcare professionals, patients and policymakers all have an important role to play in addressing this unmet need, to lessen the preventable burden of flu as a complication of diabetes. The research shows it is time for action.”

Today, approximately 440,000 people are living with diabetes in Singapore, this number is estimated to go up to 1 million by 2050.

Annual flu vaccination is the most effective healthcare measure to protect against flu infection and its complications. Flu is present throughout the year in Singapore and at-risk individuals are recommended to get vaccinated any time of the year.

The economic cost of diabetes in Singapore was more than \$1 billion in 2010 and is expected to soar beyond \$2.5 billion by 2050. The cost per working-age person as a result of their having diabetes was \$7,678 in 2010 and it is predicted to go up to \$10,596 per person living with diabetes by 2050.