

Influenza Vaccination Coverage Rates in Ireland during the winter of 2006/2007

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Objectives: The objectives of the survey were to identify the level of influenza vaccination coverage in Ireland in 2006/2007, to understand the drivers and barriers to vaccination, to find out vaccination intentions for the next winter and major encouraging factors to vaccination.

Methodology: A telephone omnibus survey (using CATI system) was conducted among 2023 non-institutionalised individuals representative of the population aged 15 years old and over. The research was carried out in January and February 2007.

Results: Influenza vaccination coverage rate (VCR) reached in 2006/2007 a level of 16% in the population with 3% for the first time. The highest level of vaccination (63%) was found among the elderly age-recommended people, defined as the persons aged 65 and over.

In 2006/2007, 68% of the population had never been vaccinated.

Perceiving influenza as a serious illness (51%), receiving recommendation from a family doctor or nurse (46%) and impeding transmission to family and friends (31%) were the most frequent motivations for getting vaccinated. In people who have never been vaccinated before, the major barriers towards immunization were feeling unlikely to catch the flu (40%), not having considered vaccination (36%) and the absence of advice given by the family doctor (27%). Among previously vaccinated people dropping out this winter, forgetfulness (54%), not being apprehensive about the flu (22%), followed by the lack of recommendation from the doctor at work (13%) were the main causes for not being vaccinated.

For next winter 2007/2008, 31% of the surveyed people intended to get a flu jab. Vaccination intentions among the elderly (73%) were higher than in the rest of the population.

The most promoting factors to augment VCR were receiving advice from healthcare professionals (65%) as well as more available information on influenza as disease (40%).

Conclusion: During winter 2006/2007, vaccination coverage rate was 16% in the Irish population over 15 years of age, with 63% among the over 65s. Our findings suggest that the family doctor's encouragement to get vaccinated is an important cornerstone for increasing the vaccine uptake.