

Information on Tamiflu

How effective is the anti-viral medicine Tamiflu against influenza?

Tamiflu is one of two medicines that are effective against the strains of Influenza A and B.

The WHO have advised all health authorities to stockpile anti-viral medicines to prepare for a pandemic. New Zealand has followed that advice.

Will Tamiflu cure people sick with the Pandemic Influenza virus?

We don't know for sure.

When people have seasonal influenza, Tamiflu reduces symptoms and may shorten the duration of illness by a day and a half.

If otherwise healthy people who are ill with influenza take it, they are less likely to develop complications of influenza. Those complications are usually treated with antibiotics.

Does Tamiflu prevent people from getting influenza?

Yes it does, but it is not the best means of preventing influenza. Vaccination is the best protection against influenza, which is why people are encouraged to immunise against seasonal influenza every year. Tamiflu will help until a pandemic vaccine arrives.

For more information on how Tamiflu works against influenza, see the Medsafe website (www.medsafe.govt.nz).

How does Tamiflu work?

It is a medicine that only works against influenza viruses A and B.

It does not work against other viruses or bacteria that can cause illness similar to influenza or that can cause respiratory infection. If taken within 48 hours of becoming ill it stops the virus from bursting out of infected cells, infecting new cells and possibly other people.

Will masks help protect me and my family from the influenza virus?

A surgical mask, if put on someone who is sick, will help reduce the spread of infection, because it will reduce the amount of virus spread by coughs and sneezes.

People who are not sick and who are very close to the person who is coughing and sneezing - closer than 1 metre - may get some protection by covering their own nose and mouth with a mask. Again, this is because the mask will catch some of the virus in the cough and sneeze droplets.

The following people should not take Tamiflu

- People with past hypersensitivity to oseltamivir phosphate or any component of the product.
- Not to be used as treatment children under 1 year of age.
- Not to be given to pregnant women
- Not to be used as prophylaxis in children under 13 years of age.
- Dose adjustment required for people undergoing haemodialysis or with end stage renal disease, or who are fructose-intolerant (see protocol and consult with Medical Officer of Health).
- Animal studies do not suggest harmful effects to the fetus or breast-fed babies but there are no human data. Tamiflu should therefore be used only if the potential benefit justifies the potential risk.

What about interactions between Tamiflu and other drugs I am taking?

There are no significant interactions known.

Side effects

Most people taking Tamiflu experience no side effects. A small proportion will experience one or more of the following:

Nausea (without vomiting)	Vomiting	Diarrhoea	Bronchitis
Abdominal pain	Dizziness	Headache	Insomnia
Cough	Vertigo	Fatigue	Vomiting
Diarrhoea	Otitis media	Abdominal pain	Asthma (inc. aggravated)
Nausea	Epistaxis	Pneumonia	Ear disorder
Sinusitis	Bronchitis	Conjunctivitis	Dermatitis
Lymphadenopathy	Tympanic membrane disorder		

Sources

[Tamiflu datasheet](http://www.medsafe.govt.nz) on the Medsafe website (www.medsafe.govt.nz).
<http://www.moh.govt.nz/pandemicinfluenza>