



Bless you!

While for some, a blocked nose and a fever mean a day or two in bed, it can be life-threatening for others. "Flu vaccines are prepared annually for the three most likely viruses that will cause flu in that specific year," says Dr Barry Niemand, GP at Medicross Boksburg. "They're very safe, except for people who are allergic to eggs or who have experienced serious allergic reactions to flu vaccines in the past."

Flu vaccinations are available at all Medicross facilities and Netcare pharmacies. Patients should get the vaccination before the South African influenza season starts towards the end of May.

Dr Niemand confirms that flu vaccinations are most important for the following groups:

- » Babies from six months to three years
- » People over 65 years
- » People living in nursing homes
- » Healthcare workers (nursing staff, therapists and doctors)
- » Immuno-compromised patients such as those with HIV/AIDS or transplant patients.
- » Patients undergoing cancer treatment
- » Pregnant women
- » Patients with diseases like emphysema, asthma and heart problems

FAST FACT

3 million

South Africans contract influenza each year.



THE VOICE

A study by US company, Quantified Impressions, showed that the sound of a speaker's voice matters twice as much as the content. So how can you protect yours?



Dr Ronnie Ailden, ear, nose and throat (ENT) surgeon at Netcare Montana Hospital in Pretoria, advises that you should avoid the following:

1. Screaming, which exposes vocal chords to dry conditions
2. Inhaling gas and dust
3. Smoking
4. Conditions that may impact the voice, such as sinusitis and gastro-oesophageal reflux

For more info, contact the Voice and Swallowing Centre at Netcare Park Lane Hospital in Gauteng: 011 480 4000 or an ENT surgeon via www.netcare.co.za.

THE LATEST MEDICAL RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY THAT'S CURRENTLY MAKING WAVES...



Deep breath
Approximately 10% of adults who suffer from asthma are unable to control it properly using medication. Help is, however, available through a minimally invasive bronchoscopic procedure known as bronchial thermoplasty. This highly effective complementary treatment has been shown to improve the level of asthma control and quality of life in patients with severe asthma.

The procedure is for people over 18 years of age, who have uncontrolled asthma despite taking the medication prescribed by their physician, says Professor Keertan Dheda, head of the division of pulmonology at UCT Medical School and director of the lung infection and immunity unit at UCT Private Academic Hospital, one of the only two accredited centres in the country to offer the procedure.

One clinical study indicated that the procedure reduced visits to

hospital emergency departments as a result of respiratory distress by 84%. In another study, 79% of asthma patients reported a significant improvement in their quality of life, compared to patients who didn't undergo bronchial thermoplasty.



Hospital pirates

As a way to help their young patients feel less intimidated, the Presbyterian Morgan Stanley Children's Hospital in New York has turned its computed tomography (CT) scan room into a pirate-themed island. Children enter the room by walking a plank, and lie on a boat-shaped table. Radiologists then weigh anchor and slide the table into the scanner.

"It's really very fanciful and it allows children to imagine all sorts of things," says Dr Carrie Ruzal-Shapiro, the hospital's chief of paediatric radiology. "You can think about whatever you want, because you're sailing away." ■