

INTRODUCTION

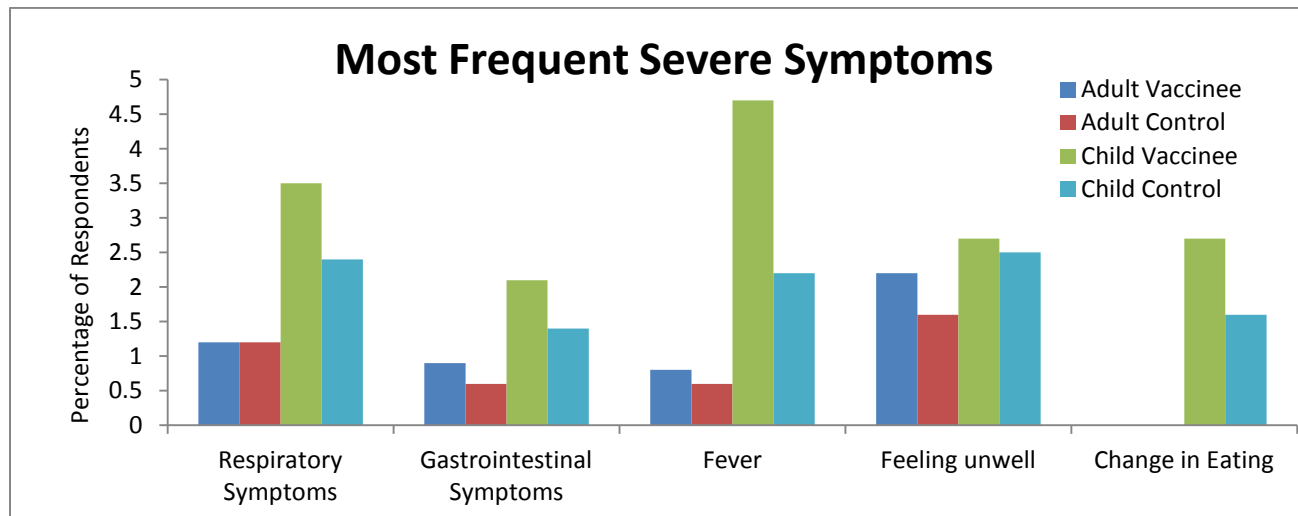
Adults and children are immunized each year to protect them from influenza (flu) and to keep them from passing it to others. Since 2009, adverse events (side effects) after the flu shot have been monitored with an electronic survey (the flu vaccine safety study). This report summarizes the 2016 results of the flu vaccine safety survey, which was part of Canada's flu vaccine safety monitoring.

METHODS

In the fall of 2016 adults and parents of children who received the flu shot were invited to take part in the flu vaccine safety study. Participants who provided consent and their email address were asked to complete a short electronic survey 8 days after their and/or their child(ren)'s flu shot. The main outcome was the frequency of any new health problems or the worsening of any existing health conditions that were severe enough to prevent normal daily activities or to require a health care visit. We compared the frequency of health events in vaccinated adults and children to the frequency of health events just before the vaccination campaign began in an unimmunized group of adults and children (control group).

RESULTS

Among the 29,252 adults and parents of immunized children that were recruited, 19,441 (67%) responded to the survey. Most participants did not report any health events after the flu shot. A total of 3.7% of vaccinated participants reported a health problem severe enough to prevent their or their child's normal daily activities and/or that caused them to seek medical care compared with 2.5% of unvaccinated participants. The table below illustrates the most common symptoms reported in vaccinated and unvaccinated participants. Fever, malaise and gastrointestinal symptoms occurred more frequently among vaccinated participants compared to controls. No unexpected side effects were observed in adults or children.



CONCLUSIONS

We observed no unexpected side effects in adults and children following the 2016 seasonal vaccines. This is the first year the rate was higher in vaccinated participants than the control group. There is still one survey left to complete for this study. You will receive it about 2 weeks before the flu immunization program starts this fall. This survey will capture health events that occur in adults and children before they get the flu shot in 2017. This will tell us how often common health events occur, such as colds and fever.

The flu vaccine safety study is part of the annual monitoring of the safety of the influenza vaccine. We will continue the study this fall (2017). If you are interested in participating again this year you can sign up when you get your flu shot.

Thank you for your participation!