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Medical Update Memo

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Influenza vaccination and multiple sclerosis

Since winter – and flu season – is just around the corner, a frequent question is whether people with MS should choose to be vaccinated against influenza. Since any vaccination can cause fever in some cases, people with MS and their doctors sometimes worry whether the vaccine or the fever might trigger an MS attack.

There is reassurance in the 1997 study by Dr. Aaron Miller, Maimonides Medical Center, Brooklyn. He found that people with relapsing-remitting MS, who had the flu vaccine, did not have more relapses than those who received a placebo injection.

"This study clearly supports the view that influenza vaccination is not associated with a statistically significant increase in MS attacks or worsening. People with MS should discuss the issue with their own physicians when making a decision about the flu vaccine," said Dr. William J. McIlroy, national medical advisor, Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada.

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