

Side effects of influenza vaccines kill seven in two years

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<http://www.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/getarticle.pl5?nn20030205a4.htm>

The side effects of influenza vaccines killed seven people in the two years through last March, and more than 80 people suffer from the adverse effects of such shots each year, the health ministry said Tuesday.

The Health, Labor and Welfare Ministry, which gave the data to the Diet at the request of a Democratic Party of Japan lawmaker, said the number of reported side effects totaled 82 cases in fiscal 2000, rising to 87 the following year.

The symptoms include fever, vomiting and shock. Most have recovered, but 21 people who took the vaccines are still suffering side effects.

The seven people who died after being injected with flu vaccines were all older than 60, the ministry said. The causes of death included acute hepatitis and acute pneumonia.

In fiscal 2001, according to health ministry data, 10 million flu shots were shipped and 6.4 million people aged over 60 were vaccinated.

Influenza vaccines are extracted from virus cultures implanted in chicken eggs. Unlike polio and other preventive vaccines, influenza vaccines do not give total immunity to recipients. However, they are effective in reducing the chances of contracting the illness as well as preventing serious complications, including pneumonia.

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