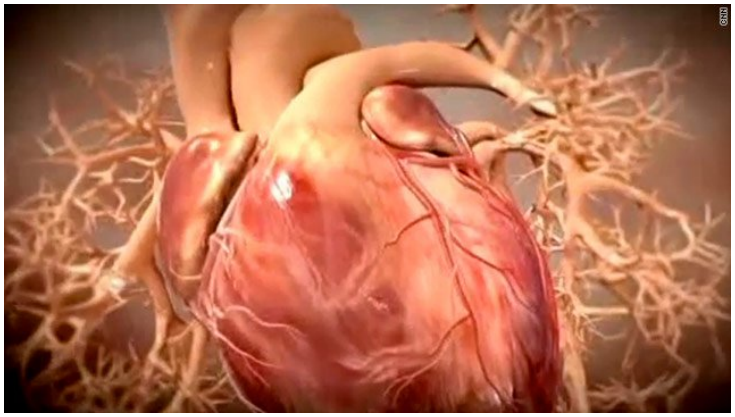
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Flu vaccine reduces heart attack risk

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Flu vaccine reduces heart attack risk



Regular shots of influenza injections have the added benefit of reducing the risk of heart attacks in people in the 40-64 age group if they have narrowed arteries. Earlier it was believed that flu shots actually increase the risk of heart diseases.

The study, reported in BMJ Open quoting the scientific journal Heart, was done by researchers at the School of Public Health and Community Medicine, University of New South Wales, Sydney by a team led by Prof Raina Macintyre. The study involved 559 heart patients over the age of 40, and was done between 2008 and 2010.

The results of the study were interesting. An influenza attack in patients did not increase the risk of triggering heart disease. And in nearly half the patients studied, a prior vaccination for flu (influenza) actually reduced the risk of developing heart attack by half. This was contrary to the notion that infections such as flu actually encourages blood to thicken or block arteries leading to heart attacks.

Based on these results, researchers recommend that people in the age group of 40-64 too should be included in the influenza vaccination programme. This age group has so far been excluded from flu vaccination as a precautionary measure against onset of heart disease.

" As such , even a small effect of influenza vaccination in preventing heart attacks may have a significant population heath gains," wrote the researchers, Prof Macintyre and Dr Anita Heywood.