

Seasonal Flu Vaccine: Common Myths Exposed

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends that everyone over the age of 6 months get a flu shot each year. Still, many people refrain because they wrongly believe one or more of the following myths.

Myth: The flu isn't so bad.

Fact: The flu can lead to serious illness, including hospitalization for pneumonia or other complications – even for healthy people. Plus, even without complications, a normal bout of the flu can keep a person out of work or school for several days.

Myth: The flu vaccine will make you sick.

Fact: The flu vaccine cannot give you the flu, although you may get side effects like a sore arm, low fever or achiness. Side effects are mild and short-lived, and definitely better than getting the flu.

Myth: Healthy people don't need a vaccine.

Fact: Anyone can become sick with the flu and experience serious complications, even people who are active and healthy. Plus, if you get the flu, you may be endangering those around you who are at a higher risk for complications.

Myth: You can still get the flu after getting the vaccine.

Fact: This one is partially true. There are a few reasons you might feel flu-like symptoms even if you've gotten the vaccine this year:

- You may have been exposed to a non-flu virus, such as the common cold.
- You may have been exposed to the flu after you got vaccinated but before the vaccine took effect. It takes about two weeks after you receive the vaccine for your body to build protection against the flu.
- You may have been exposed to a flu virus that was very different from the viruses included in this year's vaccine. The flu vaccine protects against

the three influenza viruses that are expected to be most prevalent each season, but there can be other flu viruses circulating as well.

Myth: It's too late in the season to get protection from a flu vaccine.

Fact: As long as the flu season isn't over, it's not too late to get vaccinated. Flu seasons can begin early in fall and last late into the spring, so getting a vaccine can still be beneficial into the spring months.

Myth: You only need to get vaccinated if family and



friends get sick from the flu.

Fact: If you wait until people around you get sick, it will probably be too late to protect yourself, because it takes about two weeks for the vaccine to provide full protection.

Myth: The discomfort of getting a shot isn't worth it.

Fact: Even for someone who hates shots, the very minor pain of a flu shot is nothing compared to the suffering that can be caused by the flu. Plus, many people can get the nasal-spray flu vaccine instead of getting a shot. Talk to your doctor about which is the best choice for you.

Myth: If you got the vaccine last year, you don't need to get another one.

Fact: Research suggests that your body's immunity from the flu vaccine declines throughout the year, so you likely don't have enough immunity left to be protected from getting sick this season. That's why the CDC recommends a flu vaccine each year.

Myth: The vaccine isn't safe.

Fact: Flu vaccines have been given for more than 50 years and have a very good safety track record. Flu vaccines are made the same way each year and their safety is closely monitored by the CDC and the Food and Drug Administration.

Did You Know?

The CDC recommends that people get vaccinated against the flu as soon as vaccines become available in your community. Talk to your doctor or pharmacist to find out if vaccines are currently available in your community.