

FLU MYTHS & FACTS

Myth: Vaccines can be dangerous and may have adverse health effects

FACT: Almost all people who get an influenza vaccine do not experience serious problems. Some people may experience a sore arm at the site where the shot is given. The needle stick may also cause some soreness at the injection site. The risk of a flu shot causing serious harm or death is extremely small. People who get a flu shot may also experience fever, muscle pain, and feelings of discomfort or weakness. If experienced at all, these side effects typically last 1-2 days after vaccination and are much less severe than actual flu illness.

Myth: The flu vaccine can cause the flu

FACT: The flu shot is made with flu vaccine viruses that have been inactivated (killed), and only broken up parts of the inactive virus are included in the vaccine. Therefore, the flu vaccine cannot cause the flu. However, it typically takes two weeks for the flu vaccine to become effective. During those two weeks, it is still possible for an individual to get the flu or another respiratory virus.

Myth: Flu vaccination is not necessary each year

FACT: Immune protection from the flu vaccine declines over time, so annual vaccination is critical to provide the best protection. And since the vaccine may change each year to match circulating flu viruses, it is important to get vaccinated each year. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends annual vaccination for all individuals age 6 months and older.

Myth: Healthy people don't need a flu vaccine

FACT: Anyone can get the flu; even young, healthy people are at risk. Getting vaccinated every year is important, regardless of how healthy a person is. And vaccination can help prevent the spread of the virus to others who are more vulnerable to flu and related complications.

Myth: The flu is nothing more than just a bad cold

FACT: Flu is distinct from a bad cold—it's more serious, and can cause high fever, head and body aches, coughing for days, and severe fatigue for up to two weeks or more. Flu can also lead to more serious complications and even death. In the US, millions of people get sick, hundreds of thousands are hospitalized, and thousands or tens of thousands of people die from flu every year.

Myth: There is nothing you can do if you get the flu

FACT: Know the symptoms. If you, a child, or a loved one gets sick, contact your healthcare provider immediately to discuss treatment options. Prescription antiviral drugs can make the illness milder, make you feel better faster, and may also prevent serious influenza-related complications.

References:

<http://www.preventchildhoodinfluenza.org/resources/general-resources/myths-and-facts-about-influenza.html>
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