

11 FLU MYTHS DEBUNKED



MYTH 1: You can catch the flu from the vaccine.

Each year, the flu vaccine is made from components of the flu virus that cannot transmit infection. Once administered, it takes **ONE TO TWO WEEKS** for the vaccine to offer protection from the flu virus. Those who got sick soon after receiving a flu vaccination either were infected with the flu before or just after they became vaccinated, or were infected with a different respiratory virus.

MYTH 2: Healthy people don't need to be vaccinated.



Children ages 6 months to 19 years old, pregnant women, and people who suffer from a chronic illness or are over age 49 are **STRONGLY ENCOURAGED** to get vaccinated every year, as they are the most susceptible to the flu virus. The flu shot also is recommended for healthy people — health care workers in particular — who might spread the virus to others who fall into the above categories.



MYTH 3: You don't need to get a flu shot every year.

Since the flu virus changes (mutates) each year, the flu vaccine is re-created annually to protect against the most recent dominant strains. Therefore, getting vaccinated is important to make sure you're **PROTECTED AGAINST THE STRAINS MOST LIKELY TO CAUSE A FLU** outbreak each year.

MYTH 4: Pregnant women can't get a flu shot.



The flu shot is **HIGHLY RECOMMENDED** for pregnant women, as pregnancy can cause immune, heart and lung changes that all increase the risk for flu. The severe respiratory infection and high fevers associated with flu can lead to serious pregnancy complications — even premature labor. Vaccination can also protect the baby for the first few months of life, when he or she is not old enough to get the flu shot yet is very vulnerable to illness.



MYTH 5: People with egg allergies can't get a flu shot.

Vaccines without egg proteins are available, but most people with egg allergies **WILL NOT** have a serious reaction if given a vaccine that contains egg.

MYTH 6: If you get the flu, the shot didn't work.



Unlike vaccines that offer 100 percent protection, such as vaccines for measles and polio, the flu vaccine is only about 60 to 90 percent effective. This is because **MULTIPLE STRAINS OF THE FLU VIRUS** circulate every year, and it's difficult for scientists to predict exactly which strains will be dominant. Following flu vaccination, it's possible to become infected with a strain that wasn't included in the vaccine. However, the vaccine will still be somewhat effective, and your symptoms will be less severe.



MYTH 7: Getting the flu vaccination is all you need to do to protect yourself from the flu.

Aside from getting vaccinated, protection from the flu **CAN BE MAXIMIZED** by frequent hand-washing and avoiding contact with people who have the flu. If you were exposed to the flu before vaccination, ask your doctor about antiviral medications.

MYTH 8: The flu is just a bad cold.



Influenza can cause bad cold symptoms, but it shouldn't be taken lightly. In the United States alone, the virus causes **36,000 DEATHS** and more than 200,000 hospitalizations.



MYTH 9: Flu can include gastrointestinal symptoms, like nausea, vomiting and diarrhea.

The term "stomach flu" is often used to describe illnesses with nausea, vomiting or diarrhea. While these symptoms can sometimes be related to the flu — more commonly in children than adults — they **RARELY** are the main symptoms of influenza. The flu is a respiratory disease, not a stomach or intestinal disease.

MYTH 10: You can't spread the flu if you're feeling well.



Nearly **30 PERCENT** of people carrying the influenza virus have no symptoms.



MYTH 11: If you have a high fever with the flu that lasts more than a day or two, antibiotics may be necessary.

Antibiotics work well against bacteria, but they are **NOT EFFECTIVE** in treating viral infections like the flu. However, bacterial infections can develop as a complication of the flu virus. If your flu symptoms seem to linger or worsen, see your doctor.