

# ARM yourself with information



## Facts about the flu and flu vaccine

Healthy adults can spread the flu virus the day before they feel sick.<sup>1</sup> Help reduce the risk of flu for yourself, your family and those around you.

### The impact of influenza

- Influenza, commonly known as the flu, is a contagious disease of the respiratory tract (nose, throat and lungs) that can lead to serious complications, such as pneumonia and dehydration, and worsening of chronic conditions, such as congestive heart failure, asthma or diabetes.<sup>2</sup>
- Most people who get influenza will recover in a few days to less than two weeks,<sup>3</sup> symptoms may include fever, headaches, extreme tiredness, cough, sore throat, nasal congestion and body aches.<sup>2</sup>
- On average, each year more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from complications in the United States as a result of influenza.<sup>2</sup>
- An average of 36,000 US residents die from influenza annually.<sup>2</sup>

### The value of vaccination

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends vaccination as the best way to prevent influenza and states that “the single best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccination each fall.”<sup>1</sup>
- Influenza vaccine is convenient and inexpensive, particularly when compared to the cost of getting the disease.
- Influenza vaccine is also highly effective. When the match between the flu vaccine and the circulating flu strains is close, a flu vaccination prevents influenza illness in about 70 to 90 percent of healthy people younger than 65.<sup>4</sup>

Influenza vaccination may not prevent everyone from getting the flu. Talk to your doctor about whether you have a condition that prevents you from getting a flu shot. All vaccines have side effects. The most common side effects of influenza vaccines include local reactions and mild general symptoms.

### Clearing up the confusion

There are many misconceptions about influenza vaccination. Here are just a few of the most common myths and facts about the vaccine:

**MYTH: I might catch the flu from the vaccine.**

**FACT:** Injectable influenza vaccines are made from influenza viruses that have been killed – a killed virus cannot give you the flu.<sup>4</sup>

**MYTH: I've heard the side effects from the shot are worse than the virus itself.**

**FACT:** Most people who receive the influenza vaccine do not develop serious problems; however, all vaccines have side effects. The most common side effects of influenza vaccines include local reactions and mild general symptoms. A vaccine, like any medicine, may cause problems such as severe allergic reactions.<sup>4</sup> Tell your doctor if you have severe allergies, have had a severe reaction after a dose of the influenza vaccine, or if you have ever had Guillain-Barre syndrome.<sup>5</sup>



**MYTH: The flu shot is only for old people and children.**

**FACT:** Anyone can get the flu (even healthy people), and serious problems from influenza can happen at any age, but some people are at higher risk of developing serious flu-related complications. This includes people 65 years and older, people of any age with certain chronic medical conditions (such as asthma, diabetes, or heart disease), pregnant women, and young children.<sup>3</sup>

**MYTH: The flu shot works only if you get vaccinated in the fall.**

**FACT:** Although October and November are the recommended months for vaccination (because that's when the viruses begin to circulate), a vaccination given later in the season (December through March) can still help protect you from the flu.<sup>1</sup>

#### References

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