

Influenza (flu) Vaccines: Myths and Facts

MYTH

Flu vaccines can cause flu.

#1

FACT

Flu shots are made with dead (inactivated) virus or small parts of the virus, so they cannot make you sick with the flu. The nasal spray vaccine uses a weakened virus. It can grow in the nose, but not in the lungs. That means it also cannot cause the flu. It typically takes 2 weeks for the flu vaccine to become effective, and, during those 2 weeks, it is still possible for a vaccinated individual to get flu or another respiratory virus.

MYTH

Flu vaccination is not necessary every year.

#2

FACT

Immunity 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 annually.

MYTH

Healthy people do not need a flu vaccine.

#3

FACT

Anyone can get the flu, even young, healthy people. Getting vaccinated each year is important for everyone aged 6 months and older. And vaccination can help prevent the spread of the virus to others who may be vulnerable to flu and related complications.

MYTH

The flu is nothing more than just a bad cold.

#4

FACT

Flu is not the same as a common cold—it can be far more serious. It can cause high fever, headaches and body aches, chills, and severe fatigue for up to 2 weeks or more. Flu can also lead to more serious complications, even death. On average, flu causes millions of illnesses, hundreds of thousands of hospitalizations, and tens of thousands of deaths in the US each year.

MYTH

You can't spread flu if you're feeling well.

#5

FACT

Approximately 20% to 30% of people carrying influenza virus have no symptoms.

MYTH

Chicken soup will speed up your recovery from flu.

#6

FACT

Hot liquids can soothe a sore throat and provide much needed fluids. But chicken soup has no other specific qualities that can help fight flu.



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You can catch flu from going out in cold weather without a coat or with wet hair or by sitting near a drafty window.

#7

FACT

The only way to catch flu is by being exposed to the influenza virus. Flu season coincides with cold weather. So, people often associate flu with a cold, drafty environment. But they are not related.

MYTH

I got flu even though I had my shot, so the vaccine must not work.

#8

FACT

People who are vaccinated that do get sick with flu normally experience milder symptoms than those who are not vaccinated. Many people also believe they have flu but are suffering from a different respiratory virus. It's also possible that they were exposed to influenza before protection from the vaccine kicked in.

MYTH

I can't get flu vaccine because I'm pregnant.

#9

FACT

The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists strongly recommends an annual influenza vaccine for all individuals who are pregnant, planning to become pregnant, or in the postpartum period during flu season. Patients who are pregnant have a higher risk of serious complications from influenza than other people of reproductive age.

MYTH

Home remedies with ingredients such as ginger root or watercress help me feel better when I am sick, so I don't need a flu shot.

#10

FACT

A flu shot is the best way to protect yourself, your family, and your community before you get sick. Home remedies with these ingredients, especially when combined in hot water, may alleviate symptoms, such as sore throat, after you get infected with flu. But the best way to prevent sickness is to get vaccinated.

MYTH

It is better to get sick with flu than to get a flu vaccine.

#11

FACT

Flu can be a serious disease, particularly among young children, older adults, and people with certain chronic health conditions, such as asthma, heart disease or diabetes. Any flu infection can carry a risk of serious complications, hospitalization or death, even among otherwise healthy children and adults. Therefore, getting vaccinated is a safer choice than risking illness to obtain immune protection.

