

## August 2018 Issue

### Key Facts about the Seasonal Flu Vaccine

It's never too early to begin preparing and taking steps to prevent influenza infection, including becoming better informed. The flu season varies each year with last year's turning out to be one of the worst in recent years. "Flu season" in the United States can begin as early as October and continue as late as May. The flu is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses that infect the nose, throat, and sometimes the lungs. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. **The best way to prevent the flu is by getting a flu vaccine each year.**



#### Who should be vaccinated?

- Everyone age 6 months and older should get a flu vaccine.
- It is particularly important for people at high risk of serious complications, such as children younger than age 5, adults older than 65, and pregnant women.
- Talk to your doctor before getting a flu shot if you have an allergy to eggs or any of the ingredients in the vaccine, a history of Guillain-Barre syndrome, or an acute illness or fever.

#### What are the benefits of flu vaccination?

- It can help keep you from getting sick and reduce the risk of flu-associated hospitalization
- It is an important preventive tool for people with chronic health conditions.
- It helps protect women during and after pregnancy, as well as protect the baby after birth from flu.
- Flu vaccination also may make your illness milder if you do get sick, as well as protect those around you from getting the flu.

#### When should I get vaccinated?

- It's best to get vaccinated early, before the influenza becomes more widespread. It takes about two weeks for antibodies to develop that protect against the flu.
- The CDC recommends that people get a flu vaccine by the end of October.

#### Where can I get a flu vaccine?

- Flu vaccines are offered in many locations, including physicians' offices, clinics, and pharmacies.
- Some employers offer flu vaccination clinics - opportunities for team members to receive their vaccinations on site at their workplace.

#### Why do I need a flu vaccine every year?

- The body's immune response from vaccination declines over time, so an annual vaccine is needed for optimal protection.
- Flu viruses constantly are changing, so the formulation of the flu vaccine is reviewed and updated yearly.

# Influenza: Facts v. Myths

With flu season just around the corner, it is important to dispel the many misconceptions that exist related to influenza. Flu can be a serious illness, particularly among young children, older adults and people with certain chronic health conditions. There is a lot of helpful information and medically sound advice available related to the flu, but there also are plenty of mistaken beliefs. **Below are just a few common myths:**



## 1. The flu vaccine can cause influenza.

- The injectable flu vaccine does not contain the live virus, so it is impossible to get influenza from the vaccine. Side effects may occur in some people, such as mild soreness, redness or swelling at the injection site, headache or a low-grade fever. It is recommended that everyone age 6 months and older get a flu vaccine.
- It is particularly important for people at high risk of serious complications, such as children younger than age 5, adults older than 65, and pregnant women.

## 2. The flu vaccine really doesn't work.

- The influenza vaccine will prevent influenza most of the time. In scientific studies, the effectiveness of the vaccine ranges from 70-90%, depending on how well the circulating viruses match those in the vaccine.
- Flu vaccination can make the illness milder if you do get become ill. The vaccine reduces the severity of the disease and the incidence of complications by 50-60% and the incidence of death by approximately 80%.

## 3. The flu is just a bad cold.

- Influenza may cause severe, cold-like symptoms, such as a sore throat, runny nose, sneezing, hoarseness, and cough; however, approximately 36,000 people in the United States alone die, and more than 200,000 are hospitalized each year, due to the flu.
- Getting the flu vaccine won't keep you from getting a bad cold, but even if it doesn't prevent you from contracting the flu, it can decrease the severity of the symptoms.

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## Protect Yourself from the Flu

While medical experts agree that the best way to protect against contracting the flu is getting an annual flu shot, other methods of protecting yourself or preventing the spread of the virus should be practiced as well.

### Take these actions to reduce your risk this upcoming flu season:

- Practice frequent and thorough handwashing
- Try not to touch your face and nose area
- Cover your nose and mouth (but not with your hands) when you cough or sneeze
- Sneeze into your elbow
- Avoid contact with people with cold or flu symptoms
- Stay away from at-risk groups if you are experiencing symptoms
- Remain home from work or school if you are experiencing symptoms

