



FLU MYTHS



Getting a flu shot every year decreases your chances of getting the flu. If you do get the flu, the vaccine makes you less likely to be hospitalized or die from it. Getting a flu shot will help protect your health and the people you care about, so let's bust some common myths about getting the flu vaccine!



MYTH: The flu has been almost nonexistent the last two years, so it'll be uneventful this year.



BUSTED! After two seasons of historically low flu transmission, medical professionals are worried that most people haven't been exposed to the virus and didn't build natural immunity, so the vaccine will be your best protection.

According to data from The Department of Health and Aged Care in Australia, where their flu season runs from May to September, cases have surpassed pre-pandemic levels. This could be an early warning sign of what's to come for the United States in the 22-23 flu season.



MYTH: The flu isn't that bad.



BUSTED! It can be bad, especially if you're in a high-risk population for severe flu complications including adults aged 65 and older and those with chronic health conditions like heart disease or diabetes, pregnant women, and children under the age of 2.

There is a strong correlation between the flu and cardiovascular diseases like heart disease and stroke. During recent flu seasons, about half of all adults hospitalized for the flu also had heart disease. A 2018 study found that the risk of having a heart attack was six times higher within a week of a confirmed flu infection.



MYTH: The side effects from the vaccine are worse than the flu itself.



BUSTED! Most people tolerate the vaccine very well. Some people report having mild side effects like soreness, redness, tenderness or swelling where the shot was given. Low-grade fever, headache and muscle aches also may occur. However, the flu itself can cause much worse symptoms such as fever or feeling feverish/chills, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, muscle or body aches, headaches and/or fatigue (tiredness).

There are some things you can do to reduce your chances of feeling crummy after you receive a flu shot. Stay hydrated on the day you get your vaccine, move your body with arm circles or a walk afterward, apply ice at the injection site if it is sore and avoid smoking or drinking.



MYTH: I got a flu vaccine last year, so I'm all set.



BUSTED! You need a flu vaccine every year because immunity wanes over time and because flu virus vaccines are constantly updated to protect against the most recent strain.



MYTH: I got my COVID-19 vaccine(s), so I don't need a flu shot.



BUSTED! Unfortunately your COVID-19 vaccine won't prevent the flu since they're caused by two different viruses. But the good news is that there is no recommended waiting period between getting a COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines. You can get a COVID-19 vaccine and other vaccines, including a flu vaccine, at the same visit.



MYTH: It costs too much.



BUSTED! All Health Insurance Marketplace plans and most other private insurance plans must cover certain vaccines without charging a copayment or coinsurance when provided by an in-network provider. This is true even for patients who have not met a yearly deductible.

- The cost of a flu shot without insurance will depend on where you go and the kind of shot you need, but it typically ranges from \$20 to \$75 out of pocket.
- Flu vaccines recommended for people aged 65 and older are more expensive than those for younger people.
- Medicare Part B covers 1 flu shot per flu season. (There are 4 Medicare plans, so it's only free under 3 of them - yikes.)
- Free and low-cost flu vaccine options may be available from local health centers and state health departments for those who qualify.



MYTH: The flu only impacts vulnerable groups like the elderly.



BUSTED! People 65 years and older are at higher risk of developing serious flu complications compared with young, healthy adults, but People from racial and ethnic minority groups also experience higher rates of severe influenza (flu) illness.

Overall Age-Adjusted Hospitalization Rates

- Non-Hispanic Black people had the highest flu-related hospitalization rate (69 per 100,000)
- Hispanic or Latino people had the third highest flu-related hospitalization rate (45 per 100,000)

HIGH-DOSE VACCINE

The CDC recommends that Americans 65 and older should get newer, high-dose vaccines for extra protection.

While flu seasons vary in severity, during most seasons, people 65 years and older bear the greatest burden of severe flu disease. In recent years, for example, it's estimated that between 70 percent and 85 percent of seasonal flu-related deaths have occurred in people 65 years and older, and between 50 percent and 70 percent of seasonal flu-related hospitalizations have occurred among people in this age group.

Visit heart.org/flu for more information