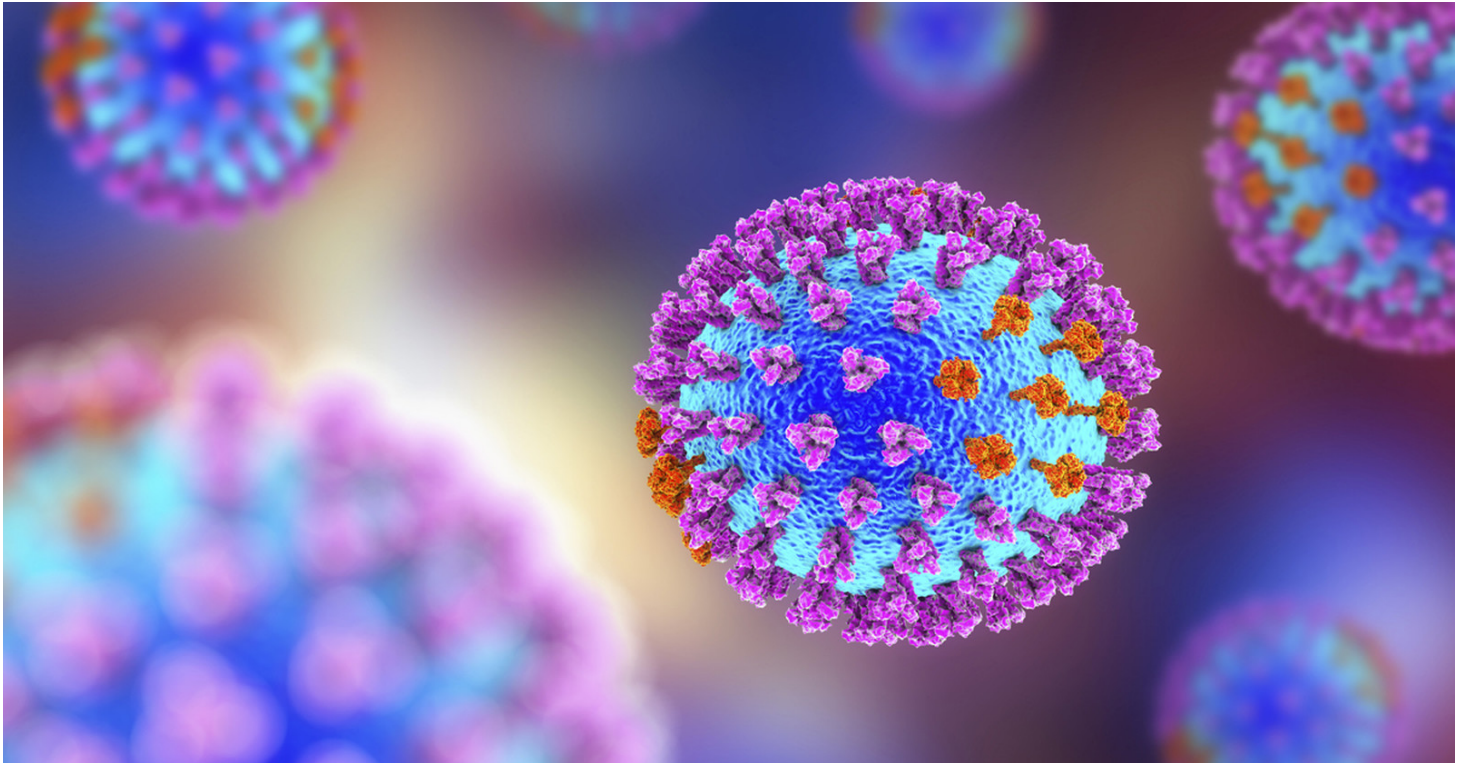




7 Myths About the Flu Vaccine

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As flu season begins, many may worry about the double threat of influenza and COVID-19. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), as well as medical associations including American Medical Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics, state that while it won't protect you from COVID-19, it is more important than ever to get vaccinated for the flu. Still, there are a lot of misconceptions about the flu and the flu vaccine. Read on to get the facts.

Myth #1: Getting the flu isn't a big deal.

Fact: The flu can be a serious disease, especially for older adults, young children, and people who have certain chronic health conditions. Even among healthy children and adults, the flu may cause serious health complications that can lead to hospitalization and death.

For the 2018-2019 flu season in the US, the CDC estimated that the flu vaccine prevented 4.4 million influenza illnesses, 2.3 million influenza-associated medical visits, and 58,000 influenza-associated hospitalizations, and 3,500 influenza-associated deaths.

Myth #2: Getting the flu vaccine can give you the flu.

Fact: Flu vaccines cannot cause flu illness. Flu vaccines delivered via an injection (flu shots) are made from inactivated (killed) viruses that cannot cause a flu illness. The vaccine delivered via a nasal spray contains live viruses that have been attenuated (or weakened), so they cannot give people the flu.

Some people may have a reaction to the flu shot. People who get the flu shot may experience soreness, redness, tenderness, or swelling where the shot was given, as well as a low-grade fever, headache and muscle aches.

People who get the flu vaccine via a nasal spray may have a runny nose, wheezing, headache, vomiting, muscle aches, fever, sore throat, or cough.

The CDC states that these reactions are usually mild, are far less severe than having the actual flu and last for a short time.

Myth #3: People who get the flu vaccine can still get the flu, so it's not worth getting vaccinated.

Fact: It's true that some people who get vaccinated still get the flu. This can happen for several reasons. Some people:

May have already been exposed to the flu virus shortly before getting vaccinated or during the 2-week period after vaccination. It takes about 2 weeks for the body to develop antibodies after vaccination.

May have become ill from other respiratory viruses besides the flu, such as rhinoviruses that cause the common cold.

May be exposed to a flu virus that wasn't included in the vaccine for that year. May get the flu even if the vaccine for that year is designed to help protect against it. Flu vaccines vary in how well they work, and some people get the flu even though they are vaccinated. A person's response to the vaccine is based on his or her overall health and age. Some older people and people who have a chronic illness may develop less immunity compared to healthy, younger people.

Several studies show that people who were vaccinated but still got the flu had less severe symptoms than people who weren't vaccinated and got the flu.

Myth #4: People don't need to get the vaccine every year.

Fact: The CDC recommends that most people 6 months and older get the vaccine every year. This is because the flu viruses are constantly changing, and the viruses that cause the flu are different from year to year. The flu vaccine is changed every year to help protect against the specific viruses that researchers think will be circulating for the upcoming year.

Also, the protection received from the flu vaccine gets weaker over time. So even if the viruses don't change from one year to the next, it is recommended that people still get

the vaccine.

Myth #5: If people don't get the flu vaccine early in the season, it's too late to get it now.

Fact: The CDC recommends getting vaccinated by the end of October. However, it's better to get vaccinated late than not at all. As long as flu viruses are active, people should get vaccinated—even in January or later. This is because flu activity can last as late as May in some years.

Myth #6: If a person has a chronic illness or is pregnant, he or she shouldn't get the flu vaccine.

Fact: The CDC recommends that most people 6 months of age or older get a yearly flu vaccination. This includes people with chronic health conditions and women who are pregnant, though the CDC recommends that women who are pregnant should get the flu shot—not the nasal spray flu vaccine.

There are some people who should speak with their doctor before getting the flu vaccine. These include:

People who have a moderate-to-severe illness with or without a fever (they should wait until they recover to get vaccinated), and

People with a history of Guillain-Barré Syndrome (a severe paralytic illness, also called GBS) that occurred after receiving influenza vaccine and who are not at risk for severe illness from influenza should generally not receive vaccine.

For more information on who should and who should NOT get a flu vaccine, visit the CDC site: <https://www.cdc.gov/flu/prevent/whoshouldvax.htm>

Myth #7: If people don't have a regular doctor, they cannot get the vaccine.

Fact: Flu vaccinations are provided at drugstores, urgent care clinics, college health centers, the public health department, and sometimes, at places of employment. You can find specific locations for your zip code at <https://vaccinefinder.org/>

If you or someone you know has more questions or concerns about getting the flu vaccine, talk with your pharmacist or healthcare provider.

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