

Time For A Flu Shot

Think you're too busy for a flu shot? In truth, you're too busy to skip one.

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Y

ears ago, when you asked someone how they were, the standard answer was “fine.” No more. Today, no matter who you ask, the standard answer is “busy.” In our fast-paced culture, precious few of us have time to get sick — especially since time away from work can mean lost productivity and wages. Between working, caring for our families and carving out a few hours each week for leisure activities, no one can actually afford to come down with the flu — especially if they have a choice.

According to the *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention* (CDC), each year more than 200,000 people are hospitalized from flu complications, and there are approximately 36,000 flu-related deaths. Sadly, many of these cases could be averted if people made the choice to get vaccinated. And many avoid immunization because of misinformation about the flu vaccine.

Are you “Flu-ent” when it comes to Flu facts? Here’s a top five list of common flu myths and the truth behind the fiction:

Flu Myth #1: The flu is nothing more than a bad cold.

Truth: In addition to cold symptoms like congestion and cough, you’re apt to have nasty body aches, chills and high fever. And while most people who get the flu recover just fine, flu-related fatalities claim almost as many lives as the annual mortality rate of breast cancer. That’s more than twice the number of people in the U.S. killed by AIDS. The flu is much more than a bad cold.

Flu Myth #2: The flu vaccine can give you the flu.

Truth: It’s not difficult, it’s actually impossible to get the flu from the flu vaccine. Why? The virus in the vaccine is dead. Catching the flu this way would be as probable as being bitten by a dead mosquito. A dead bug can’t hurt you; it’s as simple as that.

Flu Myth #3: The flu is only dangerous for the elderly.

Truth: While people over the age of 65 are most likely to become seriously ill or die from the flu, the virus can become risky for anyone, even healthy young adults. Some of the most susceptible to flu-related complications are young children.

Flu Myth #4: If you’re young and healthy, you don’t need a flu shot.

Truth: If you’re in good health and come down with the flu, you’ll probably recover just fine. But it still comes back to the time issue. Can you really afford to be laid up for one or two weeks? Plus, you might be putting those around you at risk; if you have small children, an older parent or a family member with a chronic illness, your failure to get yourself vaccinated could endanger them.

Flu Myth #5: Vaccines are dangerous.

Truth: In recent years, there has been growing mistrust of vaccines, including the flu vaccine. Some believe that there could be a link between vaccines — specifically the ingredient thimerosal — and developmental disorders in children, like autism. However, there is no evidence that vaccines cause autism. If you’re still concerned, you should know that there are thimerosal-free flu vaccines available; ask your doctor or pharmacist.

It’s impossible to turn on a computer or pick up a newspaper without reading about the H1N1 (swine) flu outbreak and the global threat it poses. With so many people suddenly focused on how potentially dangerous influenza is, now is an opportune time to schedule a seasonal flu shot. And that’s time well spent.

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