Flu Myths vs Flu Facts

Why Get Immunized?
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What is the Flu?

- Contagious respiratory illness
- Caused by the influenza virus
- Mild to severe illness
- Different from a cold
- Comes on suddenly
- Can lead to hospitalization and/or death

www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/symptoms.htm
Flu Facts

- More than 200,000 people in the United States are hospitalized each year for respiratory and heart illnesses associated with seasonal influenza virus infections.

- Over a period of 31 seasons between 1976 and 2007, estimates of flu-associated deaths in the United States range from a low of about 3,000 to a high of about 49,000 people.

- During recent flu seasons, between 80% and 90% of flu-related deaths have occurred in people 65 years and older.

The single best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccine each season!
Symptoms of the Flu

- Fever or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (tiredness)
- Vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children than adults)

www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/symptoms.htm
How is It Spread?

- Influenza is spread by respiratory droplets
  - Talking
  - Coughing
  - Sneezing
- Adults can shed the virus at least one day before signs or symptoms of the disease
- 50% of influenza infections can be asymptomatic

www.cdc.gov/flu/healthcareworkers.htm
Vaccination Rates for All Persons > 6 months for the 2014-2015 Flu Season

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Vaccination Rate</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentucky</td>
<td>48.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mississippi</td>
<td>44.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>48.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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How Many Healthcare Workers Got Vaccinated Last Season?

Early season 2014-2015, 64.3% of healthcare workers got vaccinated

By occupation

- Pharmacists – 86.7%
- Nurse Practitioners/Physician Assistants – 85.8%
- Physicians – 82.2%
- Nurses – 81.4%
- Other Clinical Professionals – 72%
- Administrative and Non-clinical Support – 59.1%
- Assistants or Aides – 46.6%

www.cdc.gov/flu/healthcareworkers.htm
Benefits of Flu Vaccination

- Keep you from getting sick from the flu
- Make your illness milder if you do get sick
- Protect those who are around you from getting sick especially those who are more vulnerable to serious flu illness

People at High Risk for Developing Flu-Related Complications

- Children less than 5 and especially less than 2 years old
- Adults 65 years of age and older
- Pregnant women (and women up to two weeks postpartum)
- Residents of nursing homes and other long-term care facilities
- American Indians and Alaskan Natives

www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/high_risk.htm
People at High Risk for Developing Flu-Related Complications

People with medical conditions including:

- Asthma
- Neurological and neurodevelopmental conditions
- Chronic lung disease
- Heart disease
- Blood, endocrine, kidney, liver and metabolic disorders
- Weakened immune system due to disease or medications
- People younger than 19 years of age who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy
- People who are morbidly obese

www.cdc.gov/flu/about/disease/high_risk.htm
“Flu vaccination is an important preventive tool for people with chronic health conditions. Vaccination was associated with lower rates of some cardiac events among people with heart disease (Ciszewski, 2008; Phrommintikul, 2011), especially among those who had had a cardiac event in the past year (Udell, 2013).”

“Flu vaccination also has been shown to be associated with reduced hospitalizations among people with diabetes (79%; Colquhoun, 1997) and chronic lung disease (52%; Nichol, 1999).”

*A list of references for the research studies mentioned above is available on the CDC website [http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/benefit-publications.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/benefit-publications.htm).*
Lets Bust Some Flu Vaccine Myths!
MYTH - The Flu vaccine can cause influenza

REALITY – The injectable flu vaccine does not contain the live virus so it is impossible to get influenza from the vaccine

www.jointcommission.org/influenza_and_influenza_vaccine_myths_and_reality/
Myth Busting

There are several reasons why someone might get a flulike illness, even after they have been vaccinated against flu.

- Became ill from another respiratory viruses besides the flu
- Exposed to influenza viruses, which causes the flu, shortly before getting vaccinated
- Exposed to a flu virus that is very different from the viruses the vaccine is designed to protect against
- Unfortunately, the flu vaccine doesn’t provide 100% protection against the flu

www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/misconceptions.htm
Myth Busting

- **MYTH** - The flu shot doesn’t work

- While vaccine effectiveness can vary, recent studies show vaccine reduces the risk of flu illness by about 50% to 60% among the overall population.

- Preliminary overall influenza vaccine effectiveness for the 2015-2016 season is 59%.

www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/misconceptions.htm
Myth Busting

○ **MYTH**
  
  • Our staff follows Standard Precautions, with good hand hygiene practices and appropriate glove and mask use – so vaccination is not necessary.
  
  • Our staff stays home if they are sick – so vaccination is not necessary.

○ **REALITY**
  
  • Adults shed influenza virus at least one day before any signs or symptoms, so health care personnel can unknowingly infect patients or other staff.
  
  • 50% of influenza infections can be asymptomatic.

www.jointcommission.org/influenza_and_influenza_vaccine_myths_and_reality/
Myth Busting

MYTH – I had a vaccine last year. I don’t need another one this year.

REALITY
• Even if you got vaccinated the season before and the virus in the vaccine have not changed for the current season, it is still IMPORTANT TO GET A FLU VACCINE EVERY SEASON!
• A person’s immune protection from vaccination declines over time.

www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/misconceptions.htm
Why We Need a Flu Shot Every Year

Influenza viruses are constantly changing. They can change in two different ways.

• Antigenic drift – are small changes in the genes of the virus as it replicates over time.
  • Cross protection
  • Over time changes can accumulate and result in the body’s immune system not being able to recognize the virus.
• Antigenic shift – abrupt, major change in the influenza A virus. When this happens people have little to no protection against the new virus.

www.cdc.gov/flu/about/viruses/change.htm
References

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