

Better Health 4 YOU

SMART Local 36 Benefit Fund

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WELLNESS-FLU SHOTS

Everything you always wanted to know, but were afraid to ask!



Why should people get vaccinated against the flu?

Influenza is a serious disease that can lead to hospitalization and sometimes even death. Every flu season is different, and influenza infection can affect people differently, but millions of people get the flu every year, hundreds of thousands of people are hospitalized and thousands or tens of thousands of people die from flu-related causes every year. Even healthy people can get very sick from the flu and spread it to others. CDC estimates that flu-related hospitalizations since 2010 ranged from 140,000 to 710,000,

while flu-related deaths are estimated to have ranged from 12,000 to 56,000. During flu season, flu viruses circulate at higher levels in the U.S. population. ("Flu season" in the United States can begin as early as October and last as late as May.) An annual seasonal flu vaccine is the best way to reduce your risk of getting sick with seasonal flu and spreading it to others. When more people get vaccinated against the flu, less flu can spread through that community.

How do flu vaccines work?

Flu vaccines cause antibodies to develop in the body about two weeks after vaccination. These antibodies provide protection

Types of Flu Shots

Traditional flu vaccines (called "trivalent" vaccines) are made to protect against **three** flu viruses; an influenza A (H1N1) virus, an influenza A (H3N2) virus, and an influenza B virus.

There are also flu vaccines made to protect against **four** flu viruses (called "quadrivalent" vaccines). These vaccines protect against the same viruses as the trivalent vaccine and an additional B virus.



against infection with the viruses that are in the vaccine.

The seasonal flu vaccine protects against the influenza viruses that research indicates will be most

common during the upcoming season.

Why do I need a flu vaccine every year?

A flu vaccine is needed every season for two reasons. First, the body's immune response from vaccination declines over time, so an annual vaccine is needed for optimal protection. Second, because flu viruses are constantly changing, the formulation of the flu vaccine is reviewed each year and sometimes updated to keep up with changing flu viruses. For the best protection, everyone 6 months and older should get vaccinated annually.

Does flu vaccine work right away?

No. It takes about two weeks after vaccination for antibodies to develop in the body and provide protection against influenza virus infection. That's why it's better to get vaccinated early in the fall, before the flu season really gets under way.

Can I get seasonal flu even though I got a flu vaccine this year?

Yes. There is still a possibility you could get the flu even if you got vaccinated. The ability of flu vaccine to protect a person

Mary Beth Cyliax RN, CCM

depends on various factors, including the age and health status of the person being vaccinated, and also the similarity or "match" between the viruses used to make the vaccine and those circulating in the community. If the viruses in the vaccine and the influenza viruses circulating in the community are closely matched, vaccine effectiveness is higher. If they are not closely matched, vaccine effectiveness can be reduced. However, it's important to remember that even when the viruses are not closely matched, the vaccine can still protect many people and prevent flu-related complications. Such protection is possible because antibodies made in response to the vaccine can provide some protection (called cross-protection) against different but related influenza viruses.

Can the flu vaccine give me the flu?

No, a flu vaccine cannot cause flu illness. Flu vaccines that are administered with a needle are currently made in two ways: the vaccine is made either with a) flu vaccine viruses that have been 'inactivated' and are therefore not infectious, or b) with no flu vaccine viruses at all (which is the case for

314-652-8175 ext. 310

recombinant influenza vaccine).

The nasal spray flu vaccine does contain live viruses. However, the viruses are attenuated (weakened), and therefore **cannot cause flu illness**. The weakened viruses are cold-adapted, which means they are designed to only cause infection at the cooler temperatures found within the nose. The viruses cannot infect the lungs or other areas where warmer temperatures exist.

While a flu vaccine cannot give you flu illness, there are different side effects that may be associated with getting a flu shot vaccine. These side effects are mild and short-lasting, especially when compared to symptoms of bad case of flu.

The viruses in the flu shot are killed (inactivated), so you cannot get the flu from a flu shot. Some minor side effects that may occur are:

- Soreness, redness or swelling where the shot was given
- Fever (low grade)
- Aches

Call me anytime with questions