

FactSheet

Para Su Información

Flu Shot: Fact or Fiction?

Do you starve a cold and feed a fever? Or is it the other way around?

Not sure how to answer these questions about the flu? Don't worry – you're not alone. As flu season approaches, many people start making excuses about why they aren't getting a flu shot this year. Some are afraid, or don't know much about it. Some believe the myth that they will get sick from the shot. Let us dispel the common myths about the flu shot.

While the old adage actually says "feed a cold and starve a fever," doctors recommend drinking plenty of fluids and eating right, no matter what ails you.

Myth

Shots are too painful, and there are no other alternatives.

Fact

There is also a nasal spray that is as effective as a flu shot, offering all the gain and no pain. Check with your doctor about its availability.

Myth

The flu vaccine can cause the flu.

Fact

The flu shot is an inactivated vaccine (containing a dead virus). The shot does not cause the flu. However, you may experience mild soreness in the arm where the shot was given. Some people may have a runny nose or scratchy throat if they choose a nasal spray vaccine instead of an injection. These symptoms only last a few days. As for the nasal spray, it's made with live, weakened flu viruses that do not cause the flu. It's approved for use in healthy people 5 to 49 years of age who are not pregnant.

Myth

Getting a flu shot didn't prevent me from getting the flu.

Fact

A flu shot is the best protection against the flu. However, there may be other viruses lurking about during flu season that can get you sick. People often confuse cold and other virus symptoms with the flu. Remember, the flu is a highly contagious, acute viral disease of the respiratory tract. Common flu symptoms include: high fever, headache, muscle aches, chills, extreme tiredness, dry cough and stomach symptoms. A cold is much milder, and rarely includes fever or a headache. It's important to know the difference between the flu and a cold so you can be treated accordingly. See a doctor to be sure.

Myth

Antibiotics help fight the flu.

Fact

Antibiotics don't help fight influenza because the illness is caused by a virus and not bacteria. It's recommended that flu sufferers take antiviral medications, get plenty of rest, drink fluids and avoid alcohol and tobacco.

Myth

I can't have eggs the day I'm getting the shot.

Fact

If you have a severe allergy to chicken eggs, it's not recommended that you get a flu shot because eggs are used to make vaccines. However, if you aren't allergic, you can eat eggs anytime.

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Myth

Only people who live in cold weather get the flu, so I have nothing to worry about.

Fact

It doesn't matter where you live or what the temperature is, the flu can spread anywhere.

Myth

If I don't get the flu shot before December, it'll be too late.

Fact

While it is best to get vaccinated in the months October and November, it is still beneficial in December or even later. Flu season peaks between late December and early March and can last until May.

Myth

If I got the flu shot last year, do I have to get one this year?

Fact

Strains of the flu virus change each year and the vaccine formula is adjusted to include the most current strain. It's important to get vaccinated no matter how many times you have had the shot.

Myth

Anyone can get a flu shot.

Fact

Some people should not be vaccinated. They include:

- People who have an allergy to chicken eggs.

- People who have had a severe reaction to an influenza vaccination in the past.
- People who developed Guillain-Barré syndrome six weeks prior to getting the vaccine.
- Children younger than 6 months of age.
- People who have a moderate or severe illness with a fever should wait to get vaccinated.

Myth

Only people who are "high risk" should get a flu shot.

Fact

People can die from the flu. The flu kills more than 30,000 Americans a year and causes 200,000 hospitalizations. While the elderly, young children and people with certain health conditions are considered high risk, anyone can get the flu and suffer from complications. It's especially important for those who are in contact with a high-risk group to get vaccinated.

For more information, visit www.cdc.gov or www.southernnevadahealthdistrict.org.



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