

# TOP 10 FLU MYTHS



## MYTH 1: The flu vaccine can give you the flu.

**FACT:** The flu shot contains an inactive virus that cannot cause an infection. The vaccine delivered by nasal spray contains a weakened, inactivated strain of the virus that cannot infect you with the flu. It can take up to two weeks for the vaccine to be fully effective. People who get sick may assume they got sick after getting vaccinated, and the flu shot caused their illness.

## MYTH 2: It's no big deal to get the flu.

**FACT:** People sometimes confuse other respiratory illnesses such as colds with the flu. However, the flu is a serious respiratory illness that can lead to hospitalization and death, especially for certain groups of people who are more at risk for severe illness. These groups include infants, the elderly and people with certain medical conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.

## MYTH 3: I'm young and healthy, so I don't need to get a flu shot.

**FACT:** The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends flu vaccinations for everyone older than 6 months of age each year. That's because healthy people aren't immune from the impacts of the flu that can include missed work, serious illness and complications such as pneumonia.

During the 2018-2019 season, the CDC estimated that vaccinations prevented an estimated 58,000 flu hospitalizations.

A 2018 study showed that from 2012 to 2015, flu vaccination among adults reduced the risk of being admitted to the intensive care unit (ICU) with flu by 82 percent.

Young, healthy people can also spread the virus to others who are more vulnerable to the impacts of the flu virus, including newborn babies who are too young to be vaccinated, the elderly, and those with compromised immune systems due to illness.

## MYTH 4: I got the flu even though I had my flu shot. The vaccine doesn't work.

**FACT:** No vaccine is 100 percent effective. If you do get sick after getting vaccinated, your illness may be less severe, and you will be less likely to develop complications from the flu if you are vaccinated.

## MYTH 5: I'm pregnant and shouldn't get a flu vaccine.

**FACT:** The CDC recommends that all pregnant women get vaccinated against the flu. Pregnant women are actually at higher risk for serious complications from flu compared to women of the same age group.

Getting a flu shot while pregnant also protects the baby after delivery. This is particularly important because infants younger than 6 months cannot get vaccinated and are more likely to become seriously ill if they contract the flu.

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Getting a flu vaccine is important to protect yourself and the people around you.  
**Learn more at [www.snhd.info/flu](http://www.snhd.info/flu).**



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## **MYTH 6: The flu vaccine has many side effects.**

**FACT:** The most common reported side effect after a flu vaccination is soreness at the injection site. The flu shot has one of the best safety records of any vaccine.

## **MYTH 7: I got a flu shot last year and don't need to get vaccinated this year.**

**FACT:** You need to get a flu vaccine every year to protect yourself against the different flu strains that circulate each year. The vaccine becomes less effective over time, and its formulation changes each year to protect against the different viruses circulating each flu season.

## **MYTH 8: If I have a high fever and the flu lasts for more than a few days, I probably need antibiotics.**

**FACT:** A virus causes the flu, and antibiotics will not help you feel better when you have the flu. Antibiotics treat bacterial infections, they won't help you, and their side effects could cause additional harm such as antibiotic-resistant infections.

If you get sick with flu, antiviral drugs may be a treatment option. Check with your doctor if you are at serious risk for complications from the flu, and you develop symptoms. Antiviral drugs can lessen flu symptoms and shorten the time you are sick by one or two days. They can also prevent serious flu complications, like pneumonia.

## **MYTH 9: If I don't get a flu shot before the holidays, it's too late to get one now – OR – I should wait to get vaccinated until the end of the season so my immunity will last.**

**FACT:** It is recommended that people get vaccinated at the beginning of flu season when the virus begins circulating. It can take about two weeks for the vaccine to be fully effective against circulating viruses. It is not too late to get the vaccine after the holidays. Flu is unpredictable and, while the season usually peaks between December and March, disease can occur as late as May.

## **MYTH 10: The "stomach flu" and seasonal flu are the same thing.**

**FACT:** Many people use the phrase "stomach flu" to describe illnesses with nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea. However, these symptoms can be caused by many different viruses, bacteria, and even parasites. While these same symptoms can sometimes be related to flu – more often in children than adults – these are rarely the main symptoms of seasonal flu. Flu is a respiratory disease and not a stomach or intestinal disease.

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