

Attention! Attention! All Health Care Workers!
THIS IS NOT A TEST
This is an Important Notice about Common Misperceptions of the Flu

MYTH #1

You are not at risk for getting the flu because you're healthy, and as someone who works in a health care environment, you've been exposed to so many germs that you're immune to everything.

FACT

Health care workers can have an increased risk of exposure to the flu due to the nature of the job.

MYTH #2

You don't have any flu symptoms so you can't transmit the flu virus to your patients.

FACT

The flu is a contagious and potentially deadly infection. Even if you don't show symptoms of having the flu yet, the virus can still be transmitted to patients. Health care workers infected with the flu can transmit the virus to patients in their care, which is particularly troubling for the many patients at high-risk for flu-related complications that can lead to serious illness, and even death (mostly in adults 65 and older). Importantly, people who live with or care for persons at high-risk of complications should get vaccinated; vaccination can help caregivers stay healthy and avoid passing the infection to others. This group includes all health care workers.

MYTH #3

You work in a large facility and there are many staff members who don't get vaccinated against the flu. So, one flu vaccination won't make a difference.

FACT

You can demonstrate your leadership by getting vaccinated against the flu and show that quality of patient care is important to you. The CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) recommends an annual flu vaccination for a number of groups, including adults at high risk of complications from the flu and those persons who are in contact with them, including health care workers. In past years, flu infections have been documented in health care settings and health care workers have been implicated as the potential source of these infections. According to the CDC, annual flu vaccination is the most effective method for preventing the flu virus infection and its complications.

MYTH #4

The flu shot isn't safe.

FACT

The flu shot does not cause the flu. The flu shot contains inactivated viruses which cannot cause infection. Many people will feel soreness in their arm after getting a flu shot, but, in general, flu shots are well tolerated. Other symptoms can include: mild fever, muscle pain, and feelings of discomfort or weakness, but these are generally less common. However, serious adverse events, including allergic reactions, may occur.

MYTH #5

The flu vaccine doesn't work.

FACT

The ability of the flu vaccine to protect a person depends on the age and health status of the person getting the vaccine, and the similarity or "match" between the virus strains in the vaccine and those in circulation.

MYTH #6

Antibiotics can work just as well as the flu vaccine.

FACT

The flu is a viral infection and cannot be treated by antibiotics. Antibiotics are **not** a substitute for the flu vaccine. However, antibiotics may be useful in treating infectious complications of the flu.

MYTH #7

By January, it's too late to get the flu vaccine.

FACT

The beginning, severity and length of the flu season can vary widely from year to year. According to CDC data, the peak in flu activity between the years 1976 and 2008 frequently occurs after December, most commonly in February. In general, health care providers should begin offering vaccination soon after the vaccine becomes available and if possible by October.