



FLU VACCINES: EASY, SMART PREVENTION

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED IF YOU REALLY NEED A FLU SHOT?

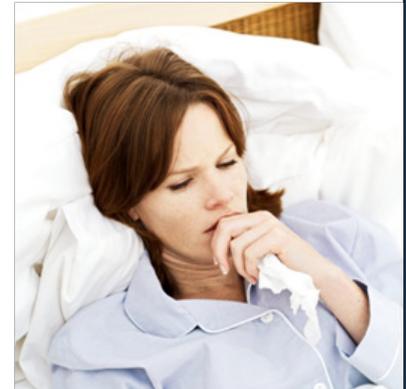
Each year, up to 20 percent of the U.S. population contracts the influenza virus and more than 200,000 people are hospitalized with flu complications, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Every flu season is different, and influenza infection affects people differently. Even healthy people can get very sick from the flu and spread it to others.

Influenza is a serious, unpredictable infection of the respiratory tract that can lead to hospitalization and sometimes even death. Flu shots are an easy and obvious preventative measure to protect yourself and those around you. The CDC recommends that everybody over the age of 6 months should be vaccinated.

The flu season in the United States runs from early October to late May. During this time each year, the flu virus circulates throughout the population and is more prevalent than during the rest of the year. An annual vaccine for the seasonal flu (either the flu shot or the nasal-spray flu vaccine) is the best way to reduce your chances of getting seasonal flu and spreading it to others.

Flu vaccines cause antibodies to develop in the body about two weeks after vaccination. These antibodies provide protection against infection with the viruses that are in the vaccine. The seasonal flu vaccine protects against three influenza viruses: influenza B, influenza A (H1N1), and influenza A (H3N2). Each year, one flu virus of each kind is used to produce seasonal influenza vaccine.

Getting vaccinated is important because the flu is highly contagious. Seniors, pregnant women, children, health care workers, and people with chronic disease are at higher risk for flu-related complications. But anybody can benefit from protecting themselves, and reducing the spread of influenza.



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