

# Frequently Asked Questions About Seasonal Influenza



## **WHEN IS IT TOO LATE TO RECEIVE THE INFLUENZA IMMUNIZATION?**

Vaccination is beneficial as long as flu viruses are circulating. Seasonal flu usually peaks between December and March most years, but can occur as late as May. It's not too late!

## **IS IT SAFE FOR PREGNANT WOMEN TO RECEIVE THE IMMUNIZATION?**

**Yes.** Vaccination helps protect women during and after pregnancy. Getting vaccinated can also protect babies from contracting the flu after birth. Studies have found vaccination can reduce a pregnant woman's risk of flu-associated acute respiratory infection by about one half, and can reduce the risk of flu illness in her baby by up to half. This protective benefit was observed for several months after birth.

## **I HEARD THE VACCINE WAS NOT EFFECTIVE THIS YEAR. SHOULD I STILL RECEIVE IT?**

**Yes.** Although the effectiveness of the vaccine can vary from year to year, it can always reduce your risk of getting sick with flu. Additionally, it can reduce the risk of hospitalization, especially among children, older adults, and those with chronic health conditions. Receiving the flu immunization has also been shown to reduce hospitalizations among people with diabetes (79%) and chronic lung disease (52%), and has been associated with lower rates of some cardiac (heart) events among people with heart disease, especially those who experienced a cardiac event in the past year.

## **CAN A FLU SHOT GIVE ME THE FLU?**

**No.** The immunization cannot cause flu illness, as it is made either with flu viruses that have been "inactivated," or with no flu viruses at all. The most common side effects from the vaccine are soreness, redness, or swelling at the injection. Low-grade fever, headache, and muscle aches also may occur. These side effects typically only last for 1-2 days.

## **IS IT TRUE RECEIVING THE VACCINE CAN MAKE ME MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO OTHER RESPIRATORY VIRUSES?**

**No.** Many studies have been conducted and have concluded the influenza vaccination does not, in fact, make people more susceptible to other respiratory infections.

## **COULD I HAVE A SERIOUS REACTION TO FLU VACCINE?**

Serious allergic reactions to the flu vaccine are very rare. If they do occur, it is usually within a few minutes to a few hours after receiving the immunization, and effective treatments are available.

## **IS IT BETTER TO GET THE FLU THAN THE FLU VACCINE?**

**No.** Any flu infection can carry a risk of serious complications, hospitalization, or death, even among otherwise healthy children and adults. Therefore, receiving the immunization is a safer choice than risking illness to obtain immune protection.

## **DO I REALLY NEED TO RECEIVE THE IMMUNIZATION EVERY YEAR?**

**Yes.** The yearly vaccine is recommended for just about everyone 6 months of age and older, even if the virus strains have not changed from the previous season.

## **IS THE "STOMACH FLU" THE SAME THING AS SEASONAL INFLUENZA?**

**No.** Although many people use the term "stomach flu" to describe illnesses that have symptoms of nausea, vomiting or diarrhea, influenza is a **respiratory** virus, not a stomach or intestinal virus such as the Norovirus.