

10 Common Flu Myths

| MYTHS | TRUTH |
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| 1. You can get the flu from the immunization. | The influenza vaccine is made from inactivated virus and can't transmit infection. It takes up to 2 weeks to get protection from the vaccine, so if the person is exposed to the virus before then, they were already going to get sick. Local reactions to the vaccine can occur including pain at injection site or low grade fever. |
| 2. I had the flu even though I was immunized, so the influenza vaccine didn't work. | Influenza vaccine is designed to cover the top three or four viruses, but a person may get a different influenza virus that is not included in the vaccine. |
| 3. Healthy people don't need immunizations. | Current recommendations include one seasonal annual immunization for everyone over 6 months of age. |
| 4. Influenza vaccine is not safe for pregnant women. | Pregnant women should receive influenza vaccine because there is a reduction in their immune system and there is a high death rate from the flu during pregnancy. Additionally, during pregnancy, the mother may transfer flu immunity to their newborns. Pregnant women should ONLY have the influenza injection, NOT the mist. |
| 5. Influenza immunizations are not needed every year. | The influenza viruses change and mutate each year. The vaccines are designed to cover the top three or four flu viruses anticipated to be most likely to cause illness in the coming season. Currently the antibodies from the influenza vaccine do not last more than one flu season. |
| 6. It is better to wait and get the influenza immunization later in flu season. | Immunity from the influenza vaccine lasts the entire flu season. It's best to receive the immunization early in the fall because the flu season is fall and winter (up through May) with the peak usually late November – March. |
| 7. Influenza is the same as a "bad cold." | The flu may cause "bad cold" symptoms, but a significant number of people are hospitalized or die from the flu every year. |
| 8. You can't spread the flu if you feel well. | 20-30% of people with the flu are asymptomatic. A person is infectious one day prior to s/s of flu to 7 days after onset of s/s. |
| 9. You can catch influenza from going out in the cold and not wearing a coat/hat or going out with wet hair, etc. | The influenza viruses are only spread with direct contact with people who sneeze, cough, or talk closely to you. The flu season is during the colder weather, but has nothing to do with any of the situations in the myth statement. |
| 10. Antibiotics are necessary with the flu. | Antibiotics do not work against viruses. Antivirals can be ordered to reduce the length of the flu by one to two days, if started within 48 hours of flu s/s. |

Resources: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) at www.cdc.gov/flu/keyfacts.htm
 Harvard Health Publications – Harvard Medical School retrieved at www.health.harvard.edu/flu-resource-center/10-flu-myths.htm